

SYDENHAM TO BANKSTOWN URBAN RENEWAL CORRIDOR Greens NSW Submission

29 January 2016



Thank you for this opportunity to make a submission in response to the draft strategy for the Sydenham to Bankstown Urban Renewal Corridor.

The Greens, after consulting with the community, do not support the proposed strategy which seeks to rezone the centre of every suburb from Sydenham to Bankstown to facilitate high-rise and medium residential and commercial development along the corridor.

In considering this proposal, we have prioritised the principle of ecologically sustainable development, been guided by the Greens' NSW party policies, listened to the residents we have consulted with from the communities who would be affected by the proposed corridor.

The Greens believe that good planning protects what is precious, encourages what is good and works on a precautionary principle when it is unsure of the impact, the proposed strategy does not ensure this.

1. No vision in proposed strategy

This strategy presents a unique opportunity to plan for the future of Sydney's inner-west and south-west suburbs and allow these suburbs to flourish as vibrant and sustainable, walkable and liveable areas.

Sadly this strategy does not provide such a plan and instead what is being proposed is an inappropriate and ill-considered plan for overdevelopment in suburbs which are already subject to an acceleration of new approvals and higher density development. The proposed strategy threatens to irremediably transform the face of nearly a dozen suburbs to the detriment of local character and heritage of the existing suburbs.

The strategy proposes to build 36,000 new apartments in the established centres of suburbs from Sydenham to Bankstown, with the vast majority of rezoning proposed to be high-rise residential and commercial development.

Under the proposed strategy, the population of a number of these suburbs would almost double without any of the much needed infrastructure, such as schools, hospitals, public transport and green open space, put in place to accompany denser development. The strategy has also not detailed a solution for increased pressure on already congested local roads or provided any funding for a single new classroom, hospital bed or childcare place.

The only public justification for the more intense development is the government's privatisation of the existing rail line and conversion to a metro style service separated from the greater CityRail network. There is not a shred of credible evidence produced by the government that demonstrates how the privatisation of a rail line facilitates such extensive development.

There is also little detail about what consideration has been given to ensure that local heritage is protected and preserved, and not neglected and demolished in favour of inappropriate overdevelopment. This is of particular concern to residents in Hurlstone Park who believe that the strategy will cause significant detriment to their community, which is uniquely characterised by Federation and Victorian era houses and a village-like atmosphere.

The strategy must not come at the detriment of these areas character and identity.

2. Impacts of higher density development

Any new planning strategy must consider the challenges of climate change and seek to minimise the greenhouse gas emissions of new development, the relationship between the density and energy efficiency are central to this. New development needs to be sustainable, environmentally sensitive and focus on reduced energy consumption to mitigate the impacts of climate change.

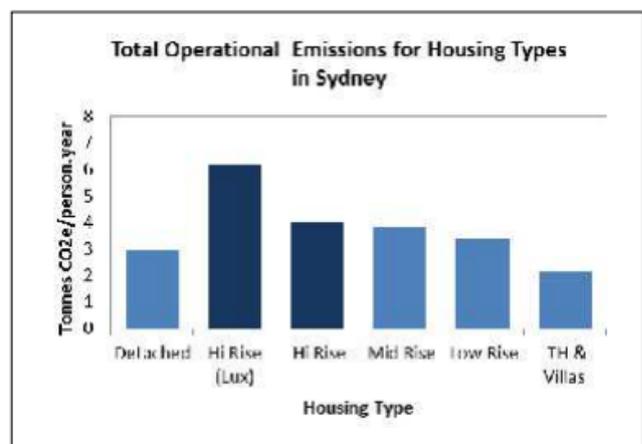
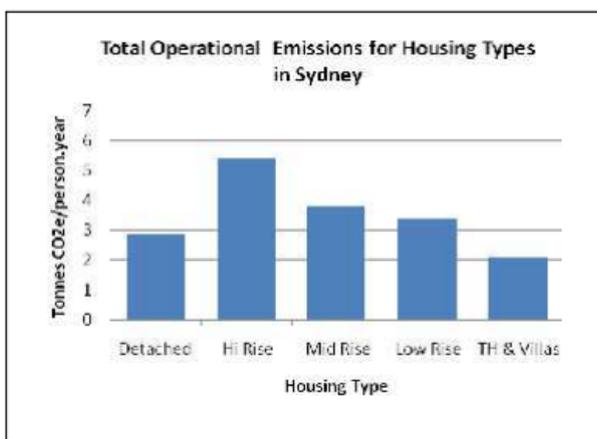
High-density development may deliver the greatest return for developer investment but urban planning research suggests that it does not reduce energy consumption or produce energy efficient outcomes.

EnergyAustralia and the NSW Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources conducted a 2005 study looking into the energy usage of multi-unit residential buildings, separating them into high-rise (9 or more storeys), mid-rise (4-8 storeys) and low-rise (up to 3 storeys), as well as townhouses (attached dwellings with common areas) and villas (detached dwellings with common areas).¹

The study found that high-rise dwellings consumed 49,063 MJ of energy per dwelling per year, compared to 30,594 for mid-rise, 27,547 for low-rise, 25,547 for townhouses and villas and 39,974 for fully detached dwellings – indicating that high-rise units consume considerably more energy per dwelling than any other form of multi-unit dwelling and even detached housing.

The vast difference in consumption is related to the poor design of most multi-storey dwellings and the provision of common areas and utilities in high rise – hot water heating, centralised heating and cooling systems, common area lighting (particularly hallways and carparks), lifts, and services such as heated pools, which are common in high-rise development.

The analysis is even more damning when considering the energy consumption per person for high-rise and medium rise dwellings as the following charts illustrate:²



Research also suggests that higher density development can also lead to adverse outcomes for communities, with a correlation between high-density living and mental illness, children's health, respiratory disease, heart attacks, cancer and human happiness. Much of this can be linked to a lack of

¹ Myors, P., O'Leary, R. and Helstroom, R. (2005) Multi-Unit Residential Building Energy and Peak Demand Study, *Energy News*

² Beattie, C., Newman, P. (2011) The Density Tradeoff: Does High Rise Living Contribute More than Living in Detached Dwellings to Greenhouse Gas Emissions?

green space and shared recreational areas, as well as an increase in air and noise pollution when density increases in communities.

In short there is no credible evidence to support high rise developments as more sustainable than other building forms; indeed the available evidence suggests the contrary. This evidence must be taken into account when considering the type of rezoning proposed in the strategy.

3. Community consultation

Our office has received a number of representations from residents advising that community consultation has been grossly inadequate and that residents have, until now, been left in the dark.

Residents in affected areas have advised they have not been notified or invited to engage in proper community consultation until the plans for the strategy were already drawn up and essentially greenlighted by the NSW Government.

On October 18 our office hosted a public meeting to discuss the strategy and engage with the community about their concerns. The meeting was attended by more than 200 residents with serious concerns, many residents advised us that they were only familiar with the strategy proposal through discussions with friends and neighbours and not through any notification from the Department.

I understand that the Department also hosted 6 “drop-in sessions” to provide information to residents about the proposed strategy. The feedback our office has received is that woefully inadequate arrangements were made to publicise these sessions and that the overwhelming response of participants was in opposition to the proposal. There is also very real concern that more than a third of the resident population from non-English speaking backgrounds have been all but ignored throughout the process.

Proper community consultation is transparent and open, but the proposed strategy provides very little detail and it appears that there are an extensive number of issues that the Department have failed to provide clear information on.

The City of Canterbury, the council area which includes the vast majority of suburbs to be affected by the strategy, has also indicated that consultation has been inadequate. Canterbury has specifically raised concerns about a lack of detail provided regarding proposed:

- urban design,
- transport constraints and opportunities,
- market demand and dwelling projection,
- economic feasibility of housing potential,
- an assessment of green open space and community facilities required to support projected growth,
- an assessment of utilities and service capacity in the corridor or;
- employment analysis for key areas of the corridor.

We acknowledge that the consultation period was extended by 2 months and hope that through this consultation process, community submissions are more genuinely engaged with, concerns are acknowledged and a nuance response is provided rather than the typical tokenistic approach that we have seen in the past.

In other words this is a chance for NSW Planning to not only read the submissions but also act on them to greatly reduce the size and scale of proposed rezonings.

4. Transport concerns

The Greens support integrated public transport solutions that are publicly-owned and operated. Good transport is fundamental to the quality of people's lives – it's how we get around, connect with each other, and go to school, university, and work. Transport planning should be carried out by doing the modelling, looking at the evidence, exploring alternatives and talking to the relevant communities before making decisions.

Sydney Metro, which the government is relying on to facilitate and justify the Sydenham-Bankstown strategy, has little to do with improving transport for the public and all to do with being a vehicle for the government's flawed agendas of privatisation and overdevelopment. The Sydney Metro is not a transport network, but simply a long isolated line being built separately to the rest of our train system.

Sydney Metro is a multi-billion dollar expenditure that will end up in a limited seating, privately operated service that will run lower capacity trains, and does not actually expand public transport to underserved areas. This plan involves closing down and downgrading the Epping- Chatswood and Sydenham-Bankstown lines. The people living and working along these lines will be forced to deal with many months of replacement buses while the Metro is being constructed.

The NSW government is well aware that it can significantly increase capacity along the Bankstown line, which is actually relatively underutilised compared to other metropolitan train lines, without converting the line to a single-deck metro. The government claim of a resulting 60% capacity increase across the network has been disputed, with a recent freedom of information request revealing little evidence to support the assertion.³ Unfortunately, with the privatisation agenda leading the metro decisions, significantly simpler and more effective solutions to increase capacity across the whole system, such as automated signalling, improving time tables and building additional lines are being deliberately ignored.

On 13 December 2015 the Greens held a community forum in Canterbury attended by up to 150 people. Residents voiced their objections to the privatisation of their train line and the adverse impacts of Sydney Metro on their area.

The government must recognise that transport decisions should not be made for the purposes of privatisation and overdevelopment, but rather to meet the transport needs of the current and future residents of NSW.

5. A viable alternative for our communities

The Greens believe in planning and housing that creates affordable, walkable, liveable communities that are sustainable well into the future. We need a planning system in NSW that fosters good development and protects the environment and our communities.

We support strategic plans that promote jobs and sensitive infill development in our community, but this needs to be done in way that is transparent, genuinely engages with the local communities needs and protects the amenity and historical values of the area. The current plans fail this test.

Some of the densest suburbs in NSW are among the most liveable. Density doesn't have to look like high rise neighbourhoods with no green space – in fact when done well density can be relatively low-rise, green and sustainable.

³ Jacob Saulwick, 'Why Sydney's Train Promises Don't Add Up' (11 January 2016)
<http://www.smh.com.au/comment/why-sydneys-train-promises-dont-add-up-20160111-gm39w1.html>

Darlinghurst, Surry Hills and Bondi are 3 of the ten densest suburbs in NSW. While each of these areas has some high rise blocks, the density is primarily comprised of terrace houses and small walk up apartment buildings of around 3 stories. Newtown ranks in the top 20 of suburbs by density and has minimal high rise development and is a desirable, liveable community.

A successful planning system can allow for increased density through infill and greenfields development in areas where this is appropriate – factors under consideration here must include necessary infrastructure including of public transport and active transport links, proximity to employment hubs, and the adequate provision of green open spaces and public recreation facilities.

We would urge NSW Planning to withdraw the current plans and work collaboratively with the affected communities on a more modest scale but high density solution for development in a limited range of suburbs where that can be accommodated while respecting local character and heritage.

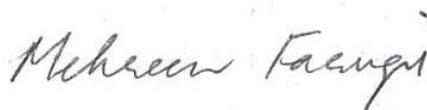
We thank you for the opportunity to provide this submission and trust you will give due consideration to the matters raised in this submission and not proceed with the proposal.

Should you wish to discuss any of these matters further, please don't hesitate to contact my office on (02) 9230 3030 or david.shoebridge@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Regards,



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