

Hills Shire Council Draft Strategic Plan to 2036

Submission comments on Planning Priorities for jobs, environment and rural areas

Comments on Planning Priorities

Planning Priority 1: Plan for sufficient jobs, targeted to suit the skills of our workforce.

This section advocates for no net decrease in land zoned for employment purposes across various industry sectors (p.18) with action to “Discourage conversion of employment land, such as our business parks and industrial lands for residential or part residential purposes” (p.20). I support the immediate implementation of this initiative.

The planning proposal for 55 Coonara Ave West Pennant Hills is currently under consideration for rezoning from business park land to residential. The proposal is inconsistent with the strategic aims of PP1 – planning for jobs. I urge council to maintain the use of the buildings on this site for commercial purposes and to oppose the rezoning of 55 Coonara Ave for high density residential.

Planning Priority 4: Retain and manage the Shire’s rural productive capacity *and*

Planning Priority 16: Manage and protect the rural/urban interface

I support the council actions listed on page 39: Discourage planning proposals which seek to re-zone viable agricultural land for residential purposes. However, I object to the intention to continue the use of rural cluster subdivision as noted in the Draft Rural Strategy p 43. “Rural cluster subdivision will continue to be utilised within the RU2 Rural Landscape and RU6 Transition zones to facilitate very limited rural residential development in conjunction with the protection of environmentally sensitive lands.” Rural areas such as Glenorie should not have pockets of higher density living as this is inappropriate for the area and causes massive losses of vegetation and tree canopy. This is inconsistent with the urban growth boundary and Council’s objectives of protecting the rural/urban interface and increasing tree canopy across the Shire. Additionally these rural lands are not located near metro train stations.

I support an “urban growth boundary” with suggested map on page 67 of the local strategic planning statement. I note that the urban growth boundary includes Dural and South Dural in the rural section and urge council to reject further increases in density for any land north of the urban growth boundary. Plan). I strongly suggest Hills shire council commits to a similar specific target of at least For example the recent Gateway Application to develop the rural land around Dural Public school into 180 dwellings is inconsistent with the urban growth boundary and Planning Priorities 4 and 16. I urge council to immediately implement the urban growth boundary for protection of rural land in the Hills Shire Council area.

Planning Priority 18: Promote increased urban tree canopy cover

The NSW State government has set a target to increase tree canopy to 40% (Central City District 40% to support NSW State government initiatives. With such a large portion of rural area and green spaces, Hills Shire Council has greater potential to increase tree canopy above 40% compared to other parts of metro Sydney.

I note the comment on page 71 “Incorporate measures to increase urban tree canopy and shading within the Public Domain Strategy.” I recommend that Council take action to identify publicly owned green space for massive tree planting efforts of drought tolerant species. Council must also commit to watering and maintaining these plants until they become established. Suggested areas for tree

planting include Alfred Whaling reserve Baulkham Hills (replace recently planted trees which have since died), Balcombe Heights Estate, Cropley House, Ted Horwood Reserve and Crestwood Reserve Baulkham Hills.

The Hills Shire Council has recently released a proposal to change the tree preservation orders such that any tree over 15 m within striking distance of a dwelling can be removed, even if the tree is healthy. This is inconsistent with PP18 – promote increased urban tree canopy cover. Additionally the proposed loss of 2000 trees at 55 Coonara Ave WPH which includes those in the critically endangered forests on the site will reduce urban tree canopy which is again inconsistent with PP18.

General development numbers given in the Strategic plan

I object to the Central City District plan which aims for an additional 38,000 residential dwellings in the Hills Shire Council by 2036. This local council area is located approximately 30 km from the CBD. It contains 70% metropolitan rural area and should not be expected to accommodate such growth. As stated on page 43 of the draft strategic statement, the Hills will meet the 5 year dwelling target of 9500 in 2 years.

Summary

I support the planning priorities of increasing tree canopy, protecting the rural/urban interface and maintaining business land for jobs. I suggest these priorities be immediately implemented. There are numerous examples of The Hills Shire Council decisions that are inconsistent with its own proposed Planning Priorities as described in the Draft Strategic Plan to 2036, some examples of which have been provided above.