

REPORT FROM CHERRYBROOK COMMUNITY FORUM

Introduction

The Forum was held on Tuesday 16th October.

The following Councillors were in attendance:

Mayor Ruddock, Deputy Mayor del Gallego (VDG), Cr Browne (RB), Cr Heyde (EH), Cr Hutchence (MH), Cr Marr (MM), Cr Waddell (WW) and Cr Tilbury (NT). Apologies were received from Cr McIntosh, and Cr Nicita.

Key Issue – the development of Cherrybrook station Precinct

The principle issue for almost all residents was their frustration regarding the proposed development of the Cherrybrook Station Precinct and the lack of information provided – over the past 6 years - by the NSW Government about its plans for the precinct – especially, although not only, residents' concerns about the development of high density, multi-storey apartments around the rail hub - in what had traditionally been a low density residential area.

We were told we could expect three storey buildings and town houses in the area

Several residents, especially those who lived near the precinct raised concerns about whether private land near the station would be rezoned or acquired for roads etc.

The residents are tired of writing to Council and Department of Planning. These are mostly older residents in the street and they feel like they are living in a vacuum as they have been waiting 6 years. Will private land near the station be rezoned or be taken (acquired) for roads etc.?

Much of this frustration was – at least initially - also directed at the Council. The Mayor, and several Councillors, explained that Council too had been trying to find out what the Government's plans for the Precinct were, but that Council had limited leverage – especially since March of this year as much of the planning power and controls Councils once possessed were now in the hands of Independent Hearing and Assessment Panels (IHAPs).

The station is due to open in 2019. There are serious problems before it opens being parking etc. What is Council doing about these problems now?

Buses will run up and down Robert and Franklin Roads. They are not wide enough to accommodate them. We have been waiting 6 years and we still do not know what they are doing.

The Mayor emphasised that Council was making every effort to ensure that the Government understood the need for a 'holistic planning approach to the precinct' - development which included necessary infrastructure such as access and egress, sufficient parking, schools, shops, green space, tree canopy etc. They saw this as a Government responsibility and were of the view that no planning should occur until the necessary infrastructure was confirmed by government – and was not left to Council to fully fund.

The Mayor said that while Council did not have the answers to many of the questions community members were asking, Council would write again to the Government and

put on record the community's concerns. The Mayor reinforced the need for infrastructure before development and cited the example of South Dural where infrastructure expectations were not met, therefore proposed development not passed by Council other than SEPP 5 aged care facilities. The Mayor said that Council required a commitment to resources for infrastructure to be addressed first before any development.

Councillor Heyde explained that she had asked one of her State Government colleagues to raise the issue with the Planning Minister and request that the government's plans be presented to the Council and the community.

The Deputy Mayor (Cr del Gallego) argued strongly for no more than three storey high apartments to be built in the station precinct (3.5 acres), however other Councillors felt that, while this might be desirable, it was nevertheless unrealistic.

Several Councillors who had had a long involvement with the State Government regarding the development of this and other precincts where transport hubs had been developed felt that development was inevitable, but that it was essential that before this happened that appropriate infrastructure was in place.

In response to questions about why the same level of proposed development was not happening around other stations such as Beecroft or Cheltenham Councillor Hutchence explained that these were older areas and often had heritage orders or covenants that prevented or limited development, and that Cherrybrook was not being singled out because it was new.

Councillor Browne explained that new land was easier to develop and that approximately 6 years ago the Government had been talking with Council about a minimum of 6 storey and maximum of 10 -15 storey's. However Council did not know what the Government's current thinking was regarding this situation.

Councillor del Gallego stressed that this was not fair and that this issue should not be about the State or Federal Government – it was about the people in the community, and the Cherrybrook community did not want high rise development.

Concern was also expressed about the trains arriving/departing every 4 minutes but going only to Chatswood not straight to the city and would this not simply mean greater congestion at Chatswood station.

A further issue about the pollution that trains will bring was raised by several residents and the need for the planting of mature trees to absorb this pollution.

The Mayor reiterated his commitment to restoring the green canopy across the Shire and agreed that extensive planting around the station was required.

The issue of the need for expansion of library services across the Shire and for a new library to be part of the infrastructure at Cherrybrook was raised. Councillor Hutchence explained that Council recognised this as an issue and was addressing it commencing with Hornsby and then possibly Galston and Berowra.

Outcomes from the Forum

Several residents acknowledged the difficult situation the Council was in regarding its limited power to influence the Government's plans for the Cherrybrook Precinct. Residents suggested that all local lobby groups should come together and work with Council to form a committee to present a strong and united voice to the State Government, and further that Council should ask key government stakeholders,

including members of Parliament to meet with the Committee to reveal the plans for the Precinct - including infrastructure plans.

The Mayor said that he would speak with his fellow Councillors and discuss with them an invitation to State Government representatives to participate in a future forum with Council and residents.