

Local Matters Forum Ashfield/Djarrawunang Ward 23 August 2022

On Tuesday 23 August, sixteen residents of Ashfield ward gathered at the Emanuel Tsardoulis community library to discuss local matters that were of key importance to them. The agenda for the group discussion was driven by residents.

Below is a summary of the discussion:

Subject/issue	Discussion and response from Council	Further action if required
Environment and climate change		
Steps taken to tackle climate change beyond tree planting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High priority for Council and a key part of our Community Strategic plan. • Looking at a raft of initiatives from creating green corridors and transitioning to a hybrid fleet to using solar power in our buildings and encouraging sustainable transport in our LEP. • Inner West Council is the only Council with 100% fossil fuel-free investments. 	Continued focus on initiatives that support our priority of a Greener Healthier Inner West.
Staffing in the Council ecology team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential impacts of reduced ecology staff and the biodiversity in the LGA. • Some attrition but Council still has staff working in frontline and we have added 20% to natural areas in Inner West in last few years. 	
Development		
High density housing targets in the new Local Environment Plan (LEP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resident questioned whether there was room for more people in the LGA • Council officer stated that Housing target in the LEP is prescribed by the NSW Government • LEP currently on public exhibition. The community is encouraged to visit Your Say Inner West to learn more and have their say 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEP Community Webinars and drop-in information sessions available • Visit Local Planning for Local Communities Your Say Inner West (nsw.gov.au) to learn more
Hoskins Park Development Control Plans (DCP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resident questioned what confidence there is that developers will stick to what is in the LEP 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would like to see robust planning controls at strategic planning stages that would make it hard for State Govt Planning Panel to side-step these. 	
Overdevelopment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community member asked what measures are in place to avoid overdevelopment. • Council officer explained development controls exist as part of the LEP. • Public engagement for new heritage controls is currently underway and the community can provide their feedback. 	
DAs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion around the number of DAs Council receives and the number of planning staff. • GM explained the shortage of skilled staff across all disciplines including Planners. Many Council planners have gone private or to state government. • Existing Council planners are doing great work and also looking at ways to improve the process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director of Planning looking at ways to improve the planning process as well as an intake of planning graduates.
Boarding Houses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resident noted a perceived trend with boarding houses – rooms getting smaller but housing extensions are getting bigger. They asked if there is an opportunity for the Architectural Excellence panel to get involved in DAs? • Council officer advised that the Architectural Excellence Panel doesn't assess houses (private dwellings) • Boarding houses are not subject to local govt planning controls – Council doesn't get to set minimum standards. Council can only control what they look like on the outside. 	
Strategic planning		

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Parks plans of management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would like another large park in Dulwich Hill – especially for teenagers. Existing parks are always very full. • Council officer recommended that suggestions be included in the future consultation for the parks plans of management. • Residents were interested to know more about the plan for Blackmore Oval sportsground and the wetland. They wanted to ensure the Men’s Shed that currently operates there isn’t negatively impacted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future public consultation for parks plans of management • Council officers to include discussions with Men’s Shed as key stakeholders in the public consultation • Council to continue to work with Transport for NSW to improve the wetland impacted by City Westlink
Processes for good design outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community member asked what processes Council has in place to deliver good design outcomes. • Council officers explained they seek input from a number of sources including an Architectural Excellence Panel - an independent review panel consisting of architects, landscape designers and sustainability experts. • Feedback and advice is also sought from Council’s relevant Local Democracy Groups and Indigenous land management • Another resident asked how large residential buildings get approved with balconies on busy roads – major arteries eg: Canterbury Road. • Council officer stated the challenges for strategic planners to fit new densities on major transport corridors. 	
Regulations		
Backyard burning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents were frustrated by neighbours continuously burning off in their backyard despite complaints to Council. • Council officers affirmed that backyard burning is prohibited in the Inner West. 	Council officers to follow up with residents one to one following forum.
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A resident asked what rules were in place to ensure accessibility considerations are incorporated into all new and existing design particularly relating to bathroom access. 	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council officers explained that building accessibility is written into planning controls in all public buildings however this is not the case in private dwellings. 	
Heritage protection		
Heritage Conservation areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community members highlighted the importance of the Ashfield Conservation area and the need to ensure development doesn't encroach on this. • Residents asked what can be done to protect areas immediately adjacent to heritage areas. • Council officers confirmed that heritage protections are built into our planning controls and Council staff and Councillors are enthusiastic about supporting these. 	
Conservation studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community member asked if there were opportunities for local residents to be involved in conservation studies or if more community consultation can be done at an earlier stage. • Council officers stated that when heritage planning controls are being reviewed a heritage architect would be commissioned on Council's behalf and would also involve the public in consultation. 	
Legal challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A resident asked how hard it was for Council to stand up against developers from a legal standpoint. • Council's General Counsel explained the different degrees of heritage listings and what constitutes a heritage conservation area. • The General Counsel explained that Council always looks at the statement of significance and relies on Council's expert advice or seeks external consultant's advice. • Council staff explained that they vigorously support heritage conservation whenever they can. 	
Trees		

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Tree canopy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What plans are in place to improve the tree canopy? • Council officers stated that West Connex has had an impact on the Inner West's tree canopy. • Locally, Council has recently planted new trees along Canterbury Rd, Hurlstone Park and along Princes Highway. • When planting trees, consideration is given to future root growth and ensuring no impact on cables, fibre optic lines etc • Council is very supportive of planting new trees and also takes requests for new trees and adds them to its street tree planting program. 	
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A resident raised specific concerns about tree planting impacting footpath accessibility on Norton, Roberts and Arthur Streets in Ashfield. • The Council Director explained that a clearance of 1.5m is always left around new tree plantings and when stakes are removed, accessibility can sometimes be improved. 	Council officers to look into planting and accessibility on these specific streets.
Roads and traffic		
Parramatta Road	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A resident raised a concern about the possibility of Parramatta Road being narrowed and the impact this would have on traffic and safety. • The acting Director, Infrastructure, advised there are no plans to narrow Parramatta Road and that Council is an advocate for improved public transport on Parramatta Road 	
Potholes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion around potholes on Orpington Street and Frederick St • If potholes are on State roads, they are not in Council's jurisdiction and we're unable to fix them, but Council can report it on resident's behalf. • GM promoted Council's "Spot a pot" initiative encouraging residents to report potholes for a speedy fix. 	
Maintenance		

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Ashfield Town Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resident felt street maintenance in Ashfield Town Centre is lacking and it looks dirty and unkempt • GM explained that Ashfield town centre has had significant investment in recent years and Council will continue to look for other opportunities for improvement. • Council offer said there is regular street maintenance along the adjoining laneways 	
Ashfield station tunnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community member expressed concerns about the tunnel under Ashfield station looking dangerous and unsafe. • GM explained that tunnels are not Council's responsibility but that it would work with the relevant authorities to try and improve the situation 	Council offers to follow up with Transport for NSW
Toilets at Dulwich Hill Skate Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resident expressed dissatisfaction at the cleanliness of the toilets at Dulwich Hill Skate Park. • Council officer apologised and stated the toilets are cleaned regularly but would investigate 	Follow up to ensure toilets are cleaned and inspected regularly
Stray shopping trolleys around Ashfield town centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resident expressed concerns about abandoned shopping trolleys polluting the streets around Ashfield. • GM said that Council could help assist with this by getting in touch with the relevant authorities. 	Council to follow up with resident
Miscellaneous		
De-amalgamation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A community member did not believe the arguments put forward in favour of de-amalgamation were impartial. • Director, Corporate, explained that the business case is ongoing and that, in the lead up to the poll, Council distributed a letter to all residents in the LGA outlining the case for and against de-amalgamation 	The elected Council will consider the final business case at an upcoming meeting.

All questions submitted by residents who were in attendance were answered on the night. Council's Customer Service team will be following up two requests following the forum.