

**ITEM MAYORAL MINUTE: PROTECT OUR LOCAL
CHARACTER AREAS**

Department Executive Services

Author Initials: AT

REPORT

As our City and our population grow over the next decade, we must work to celebrate and protect our tradition, our heritage and our history.

The character of our local areas, developed over more than a century by our residents and businesses, must be woven into our planning for growth. We must plan for a better and brighter City whilst protecting the essential character of our local suburbs and town centres.

On 12 December 2019, the City of Canada Bay submitted a planning proposal seeking to protect the character of our local areas to the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment for a Gateway determination. The planning proposal sought to introduce Local Character Areas in accordance with our adopted Local Housing Strategy and Local Strategic Planning Statement.

The draft Local Character Areas were prepared for selected low density areas and once implemented, would have required new development to have regard to elements of neighbourhood character identified as being important by our community. The planning proposal would have enabled Council to undertake further consultation with our residents on the proposed local character areas before they were introduced.

Sadly, when the Gateway determination was issued by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment, it required the Local Character Areas to be removed prior to Council exhibiting these plans to our community. One reason given was the absence of policy certainty at a State level for local character in Local Environment Plans.

The City of Canada Bay is expected to accommodate a significant amount of new development over the next 10-20 years. The NSW Government has determined that the Rhodes Planned Precinct, the Parramatta Road Corridor and planning around Sydney Metro West stations will all be the focus of development.

In addition to these locations, the NSW government's proposed Low Rise Medium Density Housing Code will change the character of our local neighbourhoods and it is for this reason that new housing must be complemented by the protection of areas that the community views as being vital to our heritage and character. For this reason, it was our intention to seek an exclusion of the Code in the proposed Local Character Areas.

Our community has told Council loud and clear that growth must not come at the cost of the essential appeal and character of our areas.

It is imperative that Council be able to reflect the community's views in our Local Environmental Plan and that, when the Plan is finalised, we have the ability for those areas to be exempted from complying development under the Government's new Housing Code.

The protection of the character and heritage of our local areas is central to the success of our growth. I hope that the State Government can come to the table and work with Council so that we can plan for and build a City that is fit for our future – but not ignorant of our past.

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Mayor seek an urgent meeting with the Minister for Planning and Public Spaces, the Hon. Robert Stokes to discuss the implementation of Local Character Areas in the City of Canada Bay.

