

Public meeting to review 7(d) lands at Helensburgh, Otford and Stanwell Tops

Tuesday 15 September 2009

Helensburgh Workers Club

Overview of the public meeting

A public meeting was held at Helensburgh Workers Club as part of Wollongong City Council's review 7(d) lands at Helensburgh, Otford and Stanwell Tops. This meeting was part of the exhibition process for the 7(d) study to assist residents, landowners and lessees to understand changes to the Local Environment Plan that will affect their properties and community. It was organised in two parts: Council provided information about proposed planning changes at a two hour community information session (4pm – 6pm). A community forum was then held (7:30pm – 9pm) to allow community members to share their views and opinions on a wide range of issues.

The community forum had the following agenda:

1. Jane Jose from Elton Consulting opened the meeting by welcoming the community and describing the meeting process.
2. David Green, Land Use Planning Manager from Wollongong Council presented a background on the 7(d) study to give the planning matters context, describing:
 - Regional values in Helensburgh, Otford and Stanwell Tops
 - Local issues in Helensburgh, Otford and Stanwell Tops
 - A brief overview of planning history and previous Local Environmental Plans for the area
 - Definitions of the main planning zones:
 - The issues affecting each precinct:
 - Princes Highway,
 - Wilsons Creek Catchment,
 - Gills Creek, Walker Street,
 - Lady Carrington Estate South and Helensburgh Land Pooling Area,
 - Lloyd Place/Otford Road,
 - Lilyvale/Otford Valley Farm,
 - Lady Carrington Estate North,
 - Otford- central area,
 - Otford – northern area.
3. Questions were taken from the audience on the review process, then with regards to each individual precinct.

Observations of the public meeting

- The public meeting was attended by more than 300 people. People from the local area and as far as Gosford, Coogee and Mosman travelled to Helensburgh to attend the community information session.
- Despite the intense interest and concern over the proposed changes to the Local Environment Plan, the meeting was constructive and democratic in allowing people to seek information and understand the proposed changes.
- The community forum was effective in setting Council's long term agenda to create certainty in relation to land use, given the context of 40 years of uncertainty for some landowners. It effectively enabled people to hear a range of views and highlighted considerable concern over fire safety issues, particularly for the Helensburgh Community. The potential role for Council to work with Land owners on exit and land pooling strategies was clearly identified.
- The structure of the meeting was effective in enabling people to be given one on one advice during the 4pm – 6pm community information session. This meant some people did not stay on for the community forum and while others, who did stay, attended the forum with a better understanding of issues relating to their own land or neighbourhood.
- The involvement of independent facilitators was welcomed, with many from the community commenting on this. At the close of the meeting many attendees personally expressed their thanks for the smooth conduct of the meeting.
- It proved a useful strategy to have the facilitator, as independent chair of the forum, meet the community members as they arrived. This ensured community members that the meeting would be managed to allow those who wished to express a view or ask a question do so.
- The opportunity to work with David Green to review the presentation for potential issues prior to the meeting and the decision to begin the session as a formal presentation worked well.
- Separating the questions about process and then keeping the structure of questions relating to the 10 precincts also provided a framework for people to work within and enabled effective time keeping.
- Although one member of the community tried to move a motion which the chair declined to put to the meeting (on the basis that it was an information forum not a decision making session), the chair was later congratulated by that community member on the way the meeting was conducted for Council.
- The meeting's venue, Helensburgh Workers Club, was easily recognised and centrally located. However, in view the size of the venue, the size of the audience and the length of the combined information session and community forum, it would have been beneficial to have some food available on site. Presentations were strong but larger screens for the PowerPoint display would have increased their effectiveness.

Questions from the audience

THE REVIEW PROCESS

Issue

Questions

Submissions

Are 1000 names on 1 submission more powerful than 1000 submissions?

- 1 submission with 1000 names will be treated as a petition, not 1000 individual submissions.

Cost of the review

What has been spent on this process since 1997?

- Approximately \$47, 000 since 2008
- The Helensburgh Urban Capability Study cost approximately \$20, 000.

Purpose of the review

In the mid 1990s there was quite fierce opposition to similar proposal and lot of money spent on research (environmental research). Why is this happening again?

- The issues have not been resolved. Lots are still privately owned. Council and landowners require certainty.

Why weren't more detailed environmental studies undertaken before these proposed changes to 7(d)?

- Council wanted to make the review process as time and cost efficient as possible
- Detailed studies will follow as part of the Local Environment Plan considerations by the Department of Planning.

Further information

Will this information be repeated again for the people who aren't here?

- No but the presentation and further advice is available by contacting Council.

Is any information available on visual impact that can help people when writing submissions?

- Assistance and advice regarding submissions is available by contacting Council
- Visual impacts will be considered as part of future studies.

PRINCES HIGHWAY

Issue

Questions

Employment

What are the likely employment opportunities that might be created around the Princes Highway?

- Currently the area zoning allows light industrial and some restaurant uses
- This detail hasn't been decided though there aren't plans to completely commercialise or urbanise the area.

Changes to Park Street

How far will rezoning extend down Park Street? And traffic use changes?

- Traffic use changes are not considered as part of the Local Environment Plan process.

WILSON'S CREEK CATCHMENT

Issue

Questions

The impact of the current Heritage Act

Will the Heritage Act on Wilson's Creek remain? This is a danger as it prevents us from burning off/bush fire control.

- Council is unaware of a Heritage Act listing but will follow this up.
[Note – further investigations have not identified a heritage listing for this area. The area is not identified under either the Wollongong LEP 1990 or the State Heritage Register as being of heritage significance. The Illawarra RFS was contacted and they indicated that they were not aware of any heritage restriction. The only restriction they would have is based on frequency of burning due to past fires. The area is privately owned. The RFS advised that they are not aware of any applications to conduct Hazard Reductions, and it is not in their current program.]

Bushfires

What has Council got planned if there is a bushfire in Helensburgh? Extra development will mean more people to evacuate.

- Traffic management and emergency access will need to be considered if the review moves forward.

Water supply

More water will be needed in Helensburgh if development goes ahead. Apparently we don't have enough water now.

What is Council doing about this?

- Sydney Water's preliminary advice has been that Helensburgh's water supply can accommodate more people.

Rezoning

How certain will changes be, especially if residential/house building is allowed?

- This process is to try and give certainty but planning rules do change over time.

Will the area further north of Wilson's Creek be affected?

- The part of Wilsons Creek near the Helensburgh Railway Station is part of the Garrawarra SCA and not applicable to the 7(d) review.

Pollution

How can Council guarantee more development won't pollute Wilson's Creek? There will also be more erosion from chopping down trees to build additional houses

- Council will conduct detailed studies into the impact of using the land in this way and the necessary buffer zones needed to protect the creek and bushland.

GILLS CREEK

Issue

Questions

Clarification

Which report is more accurate? There is some conflicting information in the two reports' maps.

- Willana's report should be used as the main reference.
[Note – from subsequent discussion with the gentleman, the confusion related to differences between the zoning map for the draft Wollongong LEP 2009 and the 7(d) Willana proposal. The maps in the Willana report and those displayed were consistent]

LADY CARRINGTON ESTATE SOUTH AND HELENSBURGH LAND POOLING AREA

Issue

Questions

Lot sizes

If the land pool area is approximately 284 lots at 1000 square meters, realistically how many additional lots would fit on that space?

- It is unknown at this time, as the area would need to be redesigned to accommodate storm water solutions, local parks, the asset protection zone and infrastructure requirements. As a guide 300 lots could be used.

Is this area approximately 4 times as big as Landcom estate and what will it look like?

- The area will be residential, like the rest of Helensburgh
- Yes, it is approximately 4 times as big as the Landcom estate
- The minimum lot size hasn't been determined yet
- Any development plan would have to provide for amenities, open space, parks and community facilities.

Will the minimum lot size be 450 sq m like Helensburgh?

- No, it can be tailored by Council to a size appropriate for the area

Overdevelopment

How will the ongoing conversion of rural to residential development be stopped if 7(d) is passed?

- The draft Plan is not proposing further residential development along the Walker Street rural properties (south the of the Land Pooling Area).

Is the Council going to put in recreation areas for children if rezoning happens? Which landowners will lose their land?

- Yes, there will be land set aside for kids' recreation as well as other measures like Asset Protection Zones. The area would be planned in the context of the Helensburgh communities' needs.

Will the RE2 Zone include a bushfire protection zone?

- Yes, an Asset Protection Zone will be included in this zoning

Current standards demand a 100m Asset Protection Zone and this Asset Protection Zone appears only to be 25m. Why?

- This is subject to detailed design
- The 100m includes many things, such as the Asset Protection Zone, Private Recreation Area and the set back from the road in the first row of houses.
- Different Asset Protection Zones apply to different sites and land uses, and depends on such things as building materials.

Bushfires

Helensburgh's population will significantly increase - do we have an additional evacuation plan for fire?

- Council is aware this needs to be addressed. It would certainly be addressed as part of the LEP review.

Cleared lands on Walker Street are going to be used as a fire protection zone – will owners be given any compensation for this?

- Not at this point but the review is still to determine where the Asset Protection Zone should be located.

Exit strategies

Why aren't exit strategies included for this area?

- There are too many land owners to deal with, and little opportunity to provide solutions in the area.

LLOYD PLACE/OTFORD ROAD

Issue

Questions

Compensation

I am a landowner who has had a piece of land for 40 years and hasn't been able to build. Why?

- The history of the area and its planning history, especially rezoning in 1971 is central to your situation
- The same issues – especially this one - haven't been resolved since 1971, making it necessary to look at exit strategies today.

Will these landowners be paid for their land at the value it is worth today?

- The properties aren't worth much today without a dwelling entitlement and high conservation significance – Council will be looking at alternative exit strategies and potentially at land pooling, or clustering.

LILYVALE/OTFORD VALLEY FARM

Issue

Questions

Overdevelopment

Are we infilling Helensburgh rather than outfilling?

- The draft plan is proposing urban expansion but it would be considered and moderate expansion.
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Bushfires

With E3 zoning, what area needs to be cleared of bushland if housing is allowed?

- Variable depending on the individual property; it might be 50m on one side, 100m on other side.
 - Slope, bushland or forest, aspect, moist or dry forest area, type of building construction material etc must be taken into account.
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Thompson's land

The Willana Report shows Thompson Centre as zoned as E3 but other in the report it is not there

- Thompson's land should be E2
- It is privately owned and is larger than 40ha so could have house on it under the 7d zone – subject to DA assessment.

Why is Thompson's land zoned as E2 and not the adjoining area given the history of it?

- The land around Thompson's land is proposed to be zoned E2 to preserve the bushland.
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LADY CARRINGTON ESTATE NORTH

Issue

Questions

Rezoning

Why is there an E3 area to the east of the pony club?

- Because the bushland was already cleared. No dwellings are proposed

OTFORD – CENTRAL AND OTFORD – NORTH

Issue

Questions

Bushfires

Why is it acceptable to build in Otford when there is a higher bush fire risk than Lloyd Place?

- If Lloyd Place was developed it would result in few dwellings that are very widely spread so needs wide spread protection. Clearing the whole area would be a huge job. Dwellings in Otford are more clustered making it easier to design a bushfire protection strategy.

Rezoning

Is Beaumont Road included in the rezoning of this area?

- The top of Beaumont Road is proposed to be E4, the rest of Beaumont Road is proposed to be E2

What size does E3 block have to be before a dwelling is permitted?

- This is at Council's discretion – we can come up with a plan that allows a range of allotment sizes and dwellings to be permitted.

Station Road

I have owned a block in Station Road for 40 years. It is close to the station and on other side is township with the school. Why is this zoned as E2, why can't I build?

- This block is proposed to be zoned as E2 as it has been retained as bushland.

OTHER ISSUES

Hacking River

A 2006 report recommended there shouldn't be further development in area because the Hacking River Catchment has already been compromised. How will the 7(d) proposal affect the river quality and what will be done to prevent pollution?

- Willana has looked at maintaining river water quality as part of their study.
- The land pooling area would have to accommodate water protection.

Water supply

The main restriction when the Landcom development when through was going to be limited water supply. What about now? Who will pay for it?

- Sydney Water's preliminary advice has been that Helensburgh's water supply can accommodate more people.

Lot size

What is the minimum lot size on steep blocks and is this measured down the vertical or across?

- Lot size is measured horizontally but Council says that if you have a steeper block, you need a larger lot.

Overdevelopment

Under E3, how are you going to handle the barrage of DAs and assess them, and if changes are rolled back, how will deal with this?

- The E3 zoning generally reflects land uses allowed under 7(d) e.g. restaurants
- This is one of the challenges which will have to be addressed