

23 October 2015

The Hills Draft Corridor Strategy

The Hills Shire Council

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BAULKHAM HILLS BC 2153

Attention: Mr Michael Edgar – Group Manager – Strategic Planning

The Hills Draft Corridor Strategy

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on The Hills Draft Corridor Strategy (the draft Strategy). We have reviewed the draft Strategy and provide the following comments for your consideration.

There is now confusion between the council strategy (the Draft Hills Corridor Strategy) and the state's strategy (the North West Rail Corridor Strategy)

The preparation and public exhibition of the draft Strategy by The Hills Shire Council has created some confusion and uncertainty. Community members, property developers, investors and other stakeholders who have interests in the areas affected by the draft Strategy are now uncertain as to which strategy and controls apply. The NSW Department of Planning & Environment has indicated that they would be preparing detailed master plans for these areas as the next component of the North West Rail Corridor Strategy. The unexpected release of the Draft Strategy has created an environment of uncertainty which could impact upon the purchase and development of sites.

Inconsistency between the council method of measuring density and the state method

The Draft Strategy uses maximum dwellings per hectare as the measure of density permitted, as opposed to floor space ratio, which is used in the North West Rail Link Corridor Strategy. Dwellings per hectare does not translate into FSR as other site specific factors need to be taken into account, for example, the topography or slope of a site, which could result in a reduced FSR. This highly prescriptive approach to applying density does not appear to have been subjected to detailed feasibility modelling.

Council controls in the Draft Strategy are contrary to state standards

The 'dwellings per hectare' measure of permissible density appears to be an attempt by council to achieve larger dwelling sizes than those currently required under *State Environmental Planning Policy 65 – Apartment Design Guide*.

Maximum FSR will not be achievable for projects that don't comply with the apartment sizes outlined in council's Development Control Plan (DCP). This is contrary to the *Apartment Design Guide*, which states that FSR should be at least 25% greater than what can be

achieved on the site to allow for other DCP setback and building separation controls to take effect on the final building form.

Potential site amalgamation should be considered in the Strategy

These density controls have been applied to large areas within the precincts – however we understand that there is no consideration or assumption that sites will be amalgamated, and as such the density controls may in fact represent an underutilisation of a large site holdings meaning proponents would have to lodge a planning proposal to argue for more density, which is not an appropriate approach to strategic planning.

Council conflict with the state government strategy sets an undesirable precedent

Although the state government ultimately retains the power to rezone the land along the North West Rail Corridor, Council appears to be undermining state government planning authority by producing the draft Strategy an alternative. This could set an undesirable precedent if this approach is eventually successful in securing changes.

The Urban Taskforce is always willing to work closely with the Government to provide a development industry perspective on this issue. Please feel free to contact me on telephone number 9238 3927 to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely

Urban Taskforce Australia

Chris Johnson AM
Chief Executive Officer

