

Ryde planning rejection demonstrates flaws in the NSW planning system

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The decision by Ryde Council to reject a planning proposal due to community concerns demonstrates a flaw in the NSW Planning system says the Urban Taskforce.

"Ryde Mayor Jerome Laxale used the fact that around 400 submissions were against a planning proposal for a large development at Macquarie Park as the reason to reject the proposal despite the clear support from council staff in their detailed report." Says Urban Taskforce CEO Chris Johnson "Mayor Laxale stressed the loss of local amenity and character as a community concern but clearly the project was creating a new local character."

"The NSW Department of Planning promotes the importance of community participation as being about 'preserving local character' in their draft Community Participation Plan. Clearly new projects in Planned Precincts and areas around rail stations are going to have a new character that is quite different to the existing local character. At the Ryde Council meeting many community members said they wanted no development and that they wanted to preserve the existing character of their area."

"The Exhibition Draft of the Department of Planning and Environment's Community Participation Plan lists three reasons why community participation is important. This includes 'Community participation creates a shared sense of purpose, direction and understanding of the need to manage growth and change, while preserving local character.' Clearly the preservation of local character leads to minimal growth and change and this is contributing to the anti-development attitude by some community members in Ryde."

"In a pre-election environment a number of politicians are using the government policy of 'preserving local character' to lobby communities against new development. This approach is particularly apparent in Ryde where the local member, Victor Dominello, has encouraged his constituents to be against new development. This is despite the fact that that half way through the 5 year targets for new homes set by the Greater Sydney Commission for Ryde of 7,600 homes the current numbers are about 10 percent above the half way point but the slowing housing market will mean it is unlikely the GSC target will be met."

"We need greater government leadership on the creation of a new local character particularly in nominated Planned and Priority Precincts. Communities need a clear message that in the areas nominated by the NSW Government for growth that the local character will change significantly. Community input should then be about the quality of the new urban character and the mix of amenities."

"The Urban Taskforce believes the NSW Government should amend it's planning documents that focus on the preservation of local character in growth areas and replace with the creation of a future local character."

*The **Urban Taskforce** is a property development industry group, representing Australia's most prominent property developers and equity financiers.*