

25 August 2022

Department of Planning and Environment  
Locked Bag 5022  
PARRAMATTA NSW 2124

Electronic submission

To whom it may concern

## **Re Cherrybrook Station State Significant Precinct rezoning and Cherrybrook Station Precinct Place Strategy**

The construction of the Northwest Metro was a significant infrastructure project costing NSW taxpayers \$7.4 billion. The North West Metro represents a significant outlay of public expenditure on transport infrastructure, and demands that the Government seeks to maximise the return on the public investment by maximising housing and employment opportunities.

Recommendation 8.1 of the NSW Productivity Commission 2021 White Paper, *Rebooting the Economy* clearly states that to boost productivity the Government should deliver housing where there is transport capacity.

The NSW Productivity Commission recommended that the Government should “*change planning controls to enable more housing and business activity within reasonable walking distance of transport hubs on underutilised corridors.*”<sup>1</sup> The White Paper further notes the failure to capitalise on the potential of the Northwest metro line, stating that in terms of housing and jobs, it “*has fallen short of expectations*”.<sup>2</sup>

The Urban Taskforce strongly supports the position of the NSW Productivity Commission and is surprised that DPE appear to have downplayed or ignored their recommendations.

In particular, Urban Taskforce supports greater density and yield within an 800 metre radius of transport nodes and this must be supported by precinct plans. This will help create more vibrant suburbs with more housing options where people want to live – closer to established infrastructure, services and facilities, as well as reducing environmental impacts by building homes closer to jobs. Adopting this position as a minimum is the only way to do justice to this multi billion dollar taxpayer funded investment.

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<sup>1</sup> NSW Productivity Commission White Paper 2021, p. 311

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p.317

Further impetus for greater density on the site derives from the 2022 Flood Inquiry Report, which foreshadowed the need to investigate more density in areas not subject to repeated flooding events. Whilst it is expected that the implementation of the Report's 28 recommendations will take considerable time, the potential for Government owned sites like that adjoining Cherrybrook Station should not be missed at this time. Urban Taskforce notes that part of recommendation 23 dealing with tradeable rights is placed within the context of the construction of **additional homes** in line with the regional plans.<sup>3</sup>

The Cherrybrook metro station is a well-located site, with 3.5 hectares of developable land. It has excellent access to the Sydney CBD, the North Shore as well as Sydney's Northwest. This is the first opportunity for DPE to take a pro-active approach in line with Professor Mary O'Kane and Mick Fuller's Report recommendations.

Urban Taskforce asserts the NSW Government needs to capitalise on its significant investment in public infrastructure at Cherrybrook and deliver the homes the Sydney desperately needs.

Greater Sydney requires at least 40,000 new homes each year to keep up with predicted demand according to the NSW Government's Housing Strategy. The consistent failure to meet this need in recent years is exacerbated by ongoing poor performance in new housing approvals. This has helped create a housing supply and housing affordability crisis.

Within the Hornsby LGA, it is predicted that population will grow from less than 150,000 in 2016 to 178,100 in 2036.

If we are to accommodate this population, and address pressures stemming from across the Greater Metropolitan Area of Sydney, taking the maximum possible advantage of precincts adjoining transport hubs is crucial.

Under the current draft proposals for Cherrybrook Station Precinct, the rezoning will enable a new mixed-use town centre with retail, community facilities, new open space and up to 390 new homes, with a minimum of 5 per cent affordable housing. Unless this is substantially revised (upwards), this outcome would be a gross repudiation of the Flood Inquiry Report recommendations and the NSW Productivity Commissioner, Peter Achterstraat AM.

Development will be limited to no more than five stories (maximum of 20.5 metres) with a maximum FSR of part 1:1 and part 1.25:1. This must be re-visited.

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<sup>3</sup> Kane and Fuller, 2022 Flood Inquiry, vol 2 Full Report, p.301

To iterate and summarise, this is Government land adjoining a metro station, Urban Taskforce believes this is a short sighted, conservative approach that belies not only the strategic opportunities offered by this site in helping address the undersupply housing, but furthermore the current housing supply crisis.

The precinct will be a place where individuals and families want to live, closer to transport and jobs.

Previous investigations and proposals centred on Cherrybrook were more ambitious in terms of height and density:

1. the Cherrybrook Village planning proposal which sought that the planning framework in The Hills LGA part of Cherrybrook (south of Castle Hill Road) to be amended to facilitate **around 3,800 dwellings in buildings up to 21 storeys in height and FSR up to 5:1;**
2. The Hills Council's Cherrybrook masterplan focused on lands south of Castle Hill Road which **supported around 1,230 dwellings in buildings up to 8 storeys in height and a maximum floor space ratio up to 2:1;**
3. the Coonara Avenue planning proposal for land located 860m to the south-west of the metro station that sought, and has been approved for, an amendment to the planning framework **for 600 dwellings in buildings up to 22m in height.**

Even the indicative built scale prepared by the Department of Planning, Industry and Environment in 2013 under the Cherrybrook Structure Plan considers greater height of up to six storeys.<sup>4</sup>

It is disappointing that almost 10 years later, and after a much anticipated transport project was finally delivered, that heights and densities are actually lower. It is difficult to fathom that given the supply crisis, the Government is content with such a paltry housing figure right next to a Metro station.

Locally, capitalising on the opportunities of a new Metro site would help Hornsby Shire Council meet the housing targets set by the Greater Cities Commission, currently expected to be between 3,800 and 4,200. This an opportunity for the NSW Government to lead and deliver more housing in the area. In fact, the Urban Taskforce urges Councils to exceed their targets and

The fact that the surrounding surround is low density is no reason to limit the height and density of new developments around strategic nodes. Such

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<sup>4</sup> Cherrybrook Station Structure Plan, 2013, p.22

thinking would lock in lower density across much of the Sydney GMA. This inherently backward-looking mentality should be avoided at all cost. There is a real opportunity to capitalise on the public's investment in the North West Metro and deliver more housing to the area. The Urban Taskforce is concerned that the conservatism of the current proposal locks in developments that a growing Sydney will regret in the years and decades to come. The current proposal reflects an approach that characterised much of the development around transport infrastructure in the middle of the twentieth century – that are now the tired “greyfields” which are in need of transformation.

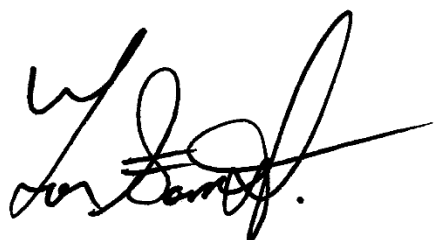
Finally, the draft SSP proposes an affordable housing target of 5%. While this may be appropriate for Government -owned land, this should not become a precedent for privately owned land, where the economic feasibility of development is significantly different to that of public land.

Urban Taskforce implores the Government to lock in more height and greater density on this strategic, public owned site. This would not only offer more housing choice with superior levels of amenity, but also offer opportunities to increase the mix of affordable housing, particularly for key workers within the community.

The Cherrybrook Metro site is a rare opportunity to delivery more housing in well situated and well connect sites. Urban Taskforce implores the Department to capitalise on this opportunity and deliver even more housing that Sydney so desperately needs.

Should you wish to discuss this submission, please contact the Urban Taskforce Head of Policy, Planning and Research, Stephen Fenn on 9238 3969 or email [stephen@urbantaskforce.com.au](mailto:stephen@urbantaskforce.com.au)

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tom Forrest', with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

**Tom Forrest**  
Chief Executive Officer