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Australia's property industry

Creating for Generations

2 August 2021

Jeremy Bath
Chief Executive Officer
City of Newcastle
Attention: Johannes Honnef
PO Box 489
NEWCASTLE NSW 2300

By email: mail@ncc.nsw.gov.au; jhonnef@ncc.nsw.gov.au

Dear Jeremy

Draft Wickham Masterplan 2021 Update

The Property Council of Australia welcomes the opportunity to provide the following comments to the City of Newcastle to inform its Draft Wickham Masterplan 2021 Update (the Plan).

The Property Council of Australia is the leading advocate for Australia's biggest industry – property. It champions the interest of more than 2,200-member companies representing a broad cross section of the property industry.

The Property Industry represents 13% of Australia's GDP and employs more than 1.4 million Australians. Our members are the nation's major investors, owners, managers and developers of properties of all asset classes. They create landmark projects, revitalised urban precincts and communities where people can live, work, shop and play. The property industry shapes the future of our cities and has a deep long-term interest in seeing them prosper as productive and sustainable places.

We welcome the City of Newcastle's (CN) initiative in updating the Plan that was originally adopted by Council in 2017, to address new challenges and new opportunities in realising the long-term vision for Wickham.

The Property Council continues to engage with key stakeholders around the implementation and future review of the strategic plans that relate to and support growth of this precinct, including the Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036, the Hunter Regional Plan and the Newcastle Local Strategic Planning Statement.

We acknowledge and appreciate the City's engagement with industry in late 2020 around this Plan and offer the following comments for consideration.

Mine Subsidence

A key element of concern is the reduction in potential overall density compared with that which was adopted in 2017, which is largely due to new information about mine subsidence.

Consideration should be given to review of advice from Subsidence Advisory NSW (SANSW) in regard to Wickham precinct with consideration to optimising development while working within the parameters deemed acceptable by SANSW. It is acknowledged they have a significant role to play but the approach can appear routinely risk averse. Consultation with SANSW should have happened much earlier in the process and while bulk grouting has been flagged as a key initiative, this should be fast tracked to help unlock the development potential of the area and the ability to meet the density targets set.

The density lost in this area due to mine subsidence or other planning decisions should look to be accommodated within the Plan, acknowledging that the main goal of these strategic plans is to unlock density in key precincts. We question the value in offsetting the density loss in other precincts that have either met their density targets or do not meet the same strategic criteria for development as Wickham.

It is understood that the update is also linked with Council's emerging Community Infrastructure Incentives Policy and details the properties and types of projects that would enable a new development to access additional density, and the bonus density limits that would apply. The Property Council refers to its May 2021 submission to this policy and the concerns raised therein, relative to the Wickham Precinct.

Local Area Traffic Management (LATM) & Carparking

With the longevity of the current plan, the loss of density should be considered in the LATM to ensure there are no adverse impacts to development in key development sites, related to traffic or parking.

We encourage a vision and plan that supports local business and residents in this regard while encouraging growth and development.

Areas proposed for development incentive - Map 10 & Table 4

This section of the updated Plan outlines the new densities and heights of key development areas identified. There is a much smaller development footprint when compared to the original Plan and this needs to be considered.

Minimum site area requirements should be labelled as more of a guide to allow for merit-based discussions on sites just under the minimum area requirements, this will ensure no additional densities are lost in what is left of key development sites across the precinct.

Conclusion

The Property Council and our members are grateful for the opportunity to provide feedback on this draft update.

We acknowledge that the 2017 Plan was a good motivator for investment and provides a foundation for certainty and we look forward to further engagement on details relative to this updated plan.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me on 0439 253 710.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anita Hugo". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Anita Hugo
Regional Director Hunter
Property Council of Australia