

Major issue: NSW Government – Increased planning powers February 2008

Interested parties:

All residents; local Councillors, all local Councils, NSW elected representatives.

Area affected:

Large parts of Sydney metropolitan area, particularly middle-ring urban areas such as Beecroft and Cheltenham.

Background:

The current NSW Government has been progressively implementing a range of land planning reform measures, to produce more effective and efficient land use planning in NSW. This is more notable in metropolitan areas where the marginal cost of additional infrastructure is expensive. This infrastructure includes the pipes, wires and drains, plus education, health, transport and community facilities that underpin urban amenity across Australia.

Positive reforms are underway in reducing the complex land-use zones developed by each of some 150 Councils across NSW into one comprehensive system that mums and dads – and Councils – can more readily understand.

The 199# Referendum failed to get community support for local Councils to be recognised as a level of government in their own right. They remain effectively franchisees of the NSW Government, providing services in their area generally specified by the 1993 NSW Local Government Act, cognate and subsequent legislation.

Key points:

- The NSW Government can and is overriding some local Council's decision making on local land use planning.
- That Government has recently replaced or supplemented local planning decision-making by appointed Planning Panels, to by-pass some Councils' deliberative planning roles. Ku-ring-gai Council is a nearby example.
- Our Hornsby Shire Council has worked positively with the NSW Government to achieve substantially increased 'shop-top' housing densities in transport hubs such as Epping and Hornsby town centres. Notable housing and commercial density increases have also occurred at Pennant Hills town centre.
- Some shop-top housing density increases are occurring in the Beecroft town centre precinct, generally consistent with its village character.
- Throughout our postcode area additional development including dual occupancy, that has been encouraged by the NSW Government, and retirement housing developments (self care/hostel/nursing home) are likely.
- Depending on resident concern, further development for medium density is possible on larger sites in our area. This might include shop-top housing of 2-3 storeys on the Beecroft Arcade or similar existing retail site.
- Medium density redevelopment of the Cheltenham Recreation Club site is possible if local residents are supportive.

Trust response:

- The Trust looks to NSW Government for better regional planning for NSW, recognising the limits to economically efficient and sustainable growth within the Sydney Basin, and more effectively encouraging lower-cost development, on a more sustainable basis throughout NSW.
- Beecroft-Cheltenham has a unique treed, heritage character that must be protected from indiscriminate development that is blighting some parts of Sydney.
- The Trust recognises the planning of some retirement and shop-top medium density in our town centre area, to promote some housing choice and meet the needs of older residents.

- This medium density housing should then free up local single-dwelling housing stock for younger families that are attracted to the area's educational facilities and green, village ambience.
- The Trust supports the need to maintain private open space in our area – including the Pennant Hills Golf Club and Cheltenham Recreation Club. The Trust encourages their effective management, as each is a key part of our community's character.

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