

21 September 2018

The Manager
Planning Reform, State Planning Commission
Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure
By email: planningreform@sa.gov.au



Dear Sir/Madam

Submission regarding the 16 Planning Reform Policies in South Australia: due by Friday 21 September 2018

SWCCA is an association which was formed in August 2012 as result of ministerial interference with the planning system, from which our community was by and large excluded, by the introduction of the Interim Development Plan Amendment, about which the community had no knowledge at the time. Since then Adelaide City Council submitted the Residential (Main Street) Development Plan to the then Minister in 2014, but it has not been finalised.

Both of these Development Plans severely impact on the amenity of residents of the South West corner of the City. As we represent a number of community members, this submission should not be viewed as one, but as many submissions from the concerned people we represent. Primarily our comments will address the implications for the South West City.

In our previous submissions on Planning Reform and the Code we have observed and reported a bias in the Reform process aimed at facilitating development and allowing for unfettered infrastructure to proceed. What little protection that remained for existing communities is being dismantled by the formalising of the following in the Planning Reform Process:

- Re-zoning,
 - Multiple assessments pathways based mostly on merit,
 - Independent certifiers,
 - Overlays,
 - Category 1 classifications,
 - Removal of non-complying developments; and
- the fact that the whole process is subject to random modification.

We have recently seen examples in the Media of disastrous development outcomes by the use of private certifiers and what appears to be the abuse of new infrastructure powers to compulsorily acquire a private property for a school.

The State Planning Policies all feed into and support our conclusion that the entire process is being economically driven and shows little concern for the resulting impacts on existing communities or, indeed, on the City of Adelaide itself.

Policy 1 makes the following statements:-

“Clear Planning Rules provide certainty to our investors and our community.”

“Quality design solutions will create quality development outcomes”.

“Establishing a clear set of planning and development priorities will support SA’s liveability”.

We agree; a clear set of rules and good design would support good development outcomes. Unfortunately, nothing about this process is good, or clear. The vast majority of development applications (and, no doubt, Heritage demolitions) will be decided on merit by various pathways using multiple zones, subzones, overlays,

infrastructure and other methods including re-zoning to achieve almost any outcome anywhere. This reform provides no certainty or consistency, clear or otherwise, for existing communities. The only people to get more certainty and consistency will be the developers and infrastructure projects.

The significant weight to be applied to quality design does not, and cannot, result in better outcomes. When the entire site is being built on, and in fact, in the majority of cases overhangs the site, there is no provision for any design input, good or otherwise. Good design cannot correct inappropriate planning decisions. It is very difficult to transform the many vast blank concrete walls popping up randomly throughout the City into anything attractive; and sticking balconies onto vast glass walls provides for little improvement.

There are several important things that are missing from the Reform Policies, which feed into the Code. Scant reference is made to amenity, residential lands, built heritage or existing community. The majority of the Policies support jobs and development above all else. It is economy-driven. There is nothing wrong with boosting employment but not at the expense of community.

What little detail, which been included on open space, access-ability and good design in practice, is not likely to occur. These items speak to the liveability of a city and their absence may help to explain why the City of Adelaide has recently dropped from 5th most liveable city in the world to 10th. The reform is so focused on the economy that planners seem to have forgotten that a community already existed in the City; it was not a vacant lot. Decisions made under the new Planning Regime are impacting negatively on the thousands of community members already living in the City.

Our City's most liveable status was built on Light's vision. What is being created now is not liveable. If the City continues down its current path we will be lucky to make the top 100 list. Our real concern is that this so-called Reform will allow for accelerated development resulting in degraded amenity throughout the City.

In prior submissions we keep repeating that you need to put the City of Adelaide and community genuinely back into the process, with hard dimensions to guide appropriate development and give a degree of certainty back to both the City and its residents, who no longer know what can be built where.

This document addresses 16 diverse Policies, some of which do not impact directly on the South West City Community. However, we have some thoughts to register.

Policy 1 - Integrated Planning: we have addressed the clear Planning Rules and quality Design Solutions raised in the Policy elsewhere in this Submission. We note however the objective of Integrated Planning is to provide for *"... liveability, growth and economic development, maximizing the benefits and positive long-term impacts of development and infrastructure investment"*. We also note that Integrated Planning will *"... support metropolitan Adelaide as a predominantly low to medium-rise City, with high-rise focused in the CBD, parts of the Park Lands Frame...."* This Objective and Policy focuses on the economic outcomes at the expense of liveability, community amenity and heritage protection.

Planning Policy 2 – Design Quality: this includes 6 principles of good design namely context, inclusivity, durability, value, performance and sustainability; all of which promote the idea of including the community, but judging by recent developments, virtually none do. It is difficult to see how the principles of good design are being implemented by this Policy. Also: *"Great places, cities and towns are enhanced by thoughtful planning and good design."* We agree; they are not created by removing existing planning rules and providing for good design principles that are not achieved. Good design may provide better outcomes for the occupants of the development; it provides no comfort for those living next to it. Another of the Design Quality Policies provides for high quality, functional and accessible public green spaces and streetscapes. However, this generally does not occur because developments are mostly built boundary to boundary.

Planning Policy 3 – Adaptive re-use: we agree with this objective which is a much more agreeable outcome than demolition, particularly of some of our magnificent sandstone and historical buildings within the City of Adelaide. These buildings are attributes to our city character, attract tourism and make the City a more liveable place. There are examples of where this has been done successfully, such as Torrens Building, Electra House, and Adina (Treasury Building); which has given these buildings a new purpose and life.

Planning Policy 4 – Biodiversity: the Planning System we agree has a role to play in *“identifying and protecting Areas of high conservation value and avoiding incompatible adjoining land uses”*. Under this Policy, it aims to *“protect and minimise impacts of development on areas with recognised values, including areas of native vegetation and critical habitat.”* We agree with this Statement and Policy but we are appalled that the City’s most valuable asset, the Park Lands, which are currently under assault, are not specified for protection anywhere in the document. The Park Lands provides amenity for all users of the City, including the residents, workers, businesses, visitors and tourists. The Riverbank Precinct should be returned to the control of the City of Adelaide as this area remains Park Lands.

Planning Policy 5 – Climate Change: we generally agree. We need an urgent overhaul of the public transport system to support community now, and if the urban density continues to increase as planned, it is critical to increase and improve the current system. In prior times, we had buses that ran on LPG but they were phased out. This Policy should allow for the reintroduction of the public transport system running on LPG or other more sustainable and less harmful fuels. The protection of areas that provide biodiversity and maximise opportunities for carbon sequestration is also critical. The Adelaide Park Lands are the lungs of the City. They should not be built out.

Planning Policy 6 – Housing Supply and Diversity: in the City of Adelaide our stock of low-income and affordable housing is becoming less available. We also fear that the remaining low-income housing areas are under threat to relocate and then these sites would be developed. We see that affordable housing is an objective of this Policy but in reality, when a new development is built there is no or little affordable component. A 2-bedroom apartment for \$460,000 is not affordable for most. The 15% affordable housing allocation in developments is not happening – you need to put in place a mechanism which will make it happen. *“Development should improve the amenity of communities and contribute to the vitality and character of places”*: in the City of Adelaide it is having the opposite effect.

Planning Policy 7 - Cultural Heritage: this is the tiniest Policy in the document. No detail has been provided in this Policy with relation to how the existing heritage stock will be protected.

The comments on Page 40 under the heading *“Our Productive Economy”* include the following:- *“(the Policy) provides confidence to investors by removing unnecessary barriers to business growth and innovation.”* The unnecessary barriers referred to above are considered essential by existing communities to protect their amenity. Also, later:- *“... aligning planning processes proportional to the complexity of the development enables a more streamlined planning system. This approach provides greater flexibility and creates more opportunity for investment attraction”*. Yet again, the economy is rated first.

Planning Policy 8 – Primary Industry: the Policies identify and protect primary industry land from inappropriate development, yet there is little or no mention of similar protection for residential land elsewhere in the document.

Planning Policy 9 – Employment Lands: Again, we make a point that there is no mention elsewhere in the document about protection of residential lands and yet the objective in this Policy is to ensure that *“employment lands”* are protected from encroachment by incompatible development. The document provides: *“The Planning System needs to support the diversification of our economy into a range of sectors and remove barriers to innovation.”* Also: - *“The level of regulation should be commensurate with the scale and complexity of*

projects: overregulation should be avoided.” Once again, the Planning Policies and Code are providing for an unhindered passage for commercial development. Here we assume “*employment lands*” referred to in the document is another description of the old commercial zoning and we wonder what else may have been built into this description.

Policy 10 – Key Resources: Policies are being put in place to prioritise and protect any land used for extractive industry (mining) by encroachments from “*incompatible uses*”. Do these incompatible uses include historical sites? Towns? Residential areas?

Policy 11 – Strategic Transport and Infrastructure: from what we understand infrastructure projects will proceed unhindered. Once designated as ‘infrastructure’ the project cannot be stopped. “*The future location of transport corridors should be identified clearly through an Overlay to ensure they are protected.*” We (again) seek assurance that any proposed tramline extension through the South West City will not be built on Whitmore Square, one of the 2 remaining squares in City of Adelaide which is intact.

Policy 12 – Energy: we note “*The Code should also identify infrastructure reserves that streamline the assessment of essential infrastructure.*” Any ‘energy infrastructure’ will be declared and will go ahead without impediment (refer to Policy 11 above).

Policy 13 - Coastal Environment: again, the Policies include protection of the environment landscapes, views and amenity of the coast – which is commendable – but in fact there is more concern shown for the amenity in these areas than there is for the preservation of residential amenity anywhere else.

Policy 14 – Water Security and Quality: the stated objective is “*South Australia’s water supply is protected from the adverse impacts of development.*” In fact, the Code will include an Overlay to ensure development mitigates adverse impacts. That is a good outcome.

Policy 15 (Natural Hazards) and 16 (Emissions and Hazardous Activities): it is pleasing that both these Policies have objectives to protect the community.

Virtually all above Policies provide for protection from inappropriate development, yet in this document the protective barriers for residential lands and heritage buildings would be removed to allow for the above economically focused developments to proceed. Infrastructure projects need no protection; it is the community and heritage, we fear, which will need protection from them.

This process, which is transforming Planning - not reforming it, was instigated by a Minister whose first action was to deregulate the City of Adelaide Development Plan. Promotion of the economy in this document is being used to justify the removal of amenity once enjoyed by the people living in the City, and in other residential areas of South Australia.

Susan Collins
 Chair
 South West City Community Association Inc
 Direct email:
 General email: swcityca@gmail.com