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State Planning Commission  
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Chair State Planning Commission  
Dear Sir

Draft Planning and Design Code – Historic Areas

We live in a house that is part of the Church Hill State Heritage Area. We also have interests in other places that are within the Light Historic Conservation Zone in Gawler. We have been actively involved in community groups and community debate about planning and heritage issues in Gawler for more than 40 years.

### **Background**

We have become increasingly concerned over recent years about the direction of planning in Gawler and surrounds. Example from about 10 years ago were the rezoning of land that was part of the Gawler racecourse for commercial development and the rezoning of land at Gawler East for residential and commercial development. Both were by Ministerial DPAs which put in place planning which had little support in Gawler. The Gawler East development in particular has not been successful, being another example of an area lacking good connectivity with the rest of Gawler, public transport etc. A lot of money has been lost in this development and it is still struggling.

More recently the State Government has used the transport corridors through Gawler to take over planning via a DPA which shows every sign of being a planning disaster for some older parts of Gawler which are near the rail corridor. We are sure the transport corridors in Gawler were never intended to have the same treatment as the major corridors in the central metro area.

Also recently it appears either as part of the transport corridors, or separately, a private developer who has been pushing for up to 6 storey or higher development at the Gawler Central train station area seems to have the inside running with the State government to facilitate such a proposal.

These sort of ad hoc and template driven developments have no place in Gawler which has its own history and character which should be the starting point for thinking about future development. Gawler's town centre is not expected to have significant commercial development over the next 10-20 years according to the studies which have been undertaken. How incongruous that we could have a one-off high rise building that completely goes against the height of development elsewhere in the historic town centre – which is a significant part of the original 1839 town plan developed by William Light. The height of current buildings in the town centre is mostly one and two storey. Taking into account the extra height of older buildings, this would equate to development up to 3 storey for modern buildings. Like many European centres, maintaining such height limits can help protect the character of the town as well as the financial interests of other businesses. This shouldn't be put at risk for the benefit of single out of place developments.

At various times, state planning authorities have blocked Council supported changes to heritage listings and protection of amenity and character in historic areas. The processing of DPAs related to such matters has been frustrated and deferred. The appropriate listing of contributory places in some council areas has been blocked for several years.

### **Current proposed “reforms”**

It will be no surprise given the above, and the relentless push for more and faster development over the last 10 years or more, that we are very sceptical about this latest round of supposed reforms to improve planning. Why should we trust a process which has shown no trust in us to effectively be involved.

Gawler Council has also been concerned about the suggested changes. Organisations such as the National Trust of South Australia and Conservation Council of SA have been very concerned. We share these concerns.

We do not support having a simplified system and templates across the state. Having the Property Council being the chief proponent of the changes also does not inspire confidence that long term benefits are the top priority. Short term thinking and quick fixes seem to be the flavor of what is proposed. We deserve a lot better.

All the wonderful words about involving the community up front with planning policies so that there could be less public involvement and less need for public involvement at the development assessment stage has actually ended up with less public involvement at both ends.

Frankly we are appalled by the mass of ever-changing documentation that has been presented and on which we are asked to respond. As ordinary citizens it is just not fair that the government has treated us this way. We are simply not in a position to study the implications of what is likely to happen if these changes.

We are also of the view expressed by many councils and other concerned organisations that much more time is needed to allow ordinary people to understand the changes proposed.

We ask the Planning Commission and State Planning Minister to take more time. Various organisations with a focus on planning and heritage protection and promotion have suggested something like a 2 year extension of time. In our view it might well be better to stop the current process and start again in order to regain some credibility. At the very least something like a timeframe extended by 2-3 years looks necessary for any likelihood of a properly considered approach. When individual DPAs from councils can take at least 3-5 years to conceive and complete, it is not unreasonable to take much longer to attempt to change the whole system. It is too late when local communities have to face the consequences of rushed processes producing the inevitable problems and eyesores.

Yours sincerely

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