

BEP 2 REDFERN/WATERLOO

27 February 2011

RWA
PO Box 332
Redfern 2016

EQUITY ISSUES

The key issue and the key failure of BEP2 as exhibited is equity:

1

It is not acceptable given the crisis in supply of public housing in the inner city to diminish the supply on a vague promise that the 700 loss will be replaced elsewhere in the City. While the benefits of social mix or a particular kind of social mix is highly debatable, there is ample scope to retain the public housing supply within these areas, while diversifying the area.

2

There must be a commitment to re-furbishing the public stock in parallel with other development, not sometime in the future.

3

There must be a commitment to using the equity and leveraging of the public land to be 100% re-invested in the public/social housing stock including a contribution to the social infrastructure including open space, within these areas.

4

The levies for affordable housing provision should be separate and levied on the private development as they are elsewhere in the City. The transport of funds from the surrounding areas to increase the provision, as being done with CUB levies, is a reasonable strategy. A richer mix of welfare house (that is what it is – please call a spade a spade) probably builds a better community, than putting upper SES owners alongside tenants of all kinds.

5

Social infrastructure, recreation, cultural facilities and open space must be shared, common, and public – no private infrastructure. Otherwise the aim of community building is a waste of time, and hypocrisy. It may be OK to have security for the residential buildings, but front doors onto the street are far preferable; and it is not OK for any other facilities to be private. The best means of achieving this is a proportional contribution from all housing into a pot, to be developed by the City of Sydney, who has done such an excellent job elsewhere in the area, including the rejuvenated Redfern Park. Who knows they will probably add to the pot.

6

As examined in depth by REDWATCH'S Submission, the provision of open space within the sites should match the local norms and the standards used for other inner development areas. A standard of 10 m²/capita for the new population, is reasonable. This must be dedicated Open Space, to be managed by the C o S, and it must be in adequate sizes and configurations to be clearly public; not consumed by wrapping buildings. And, this is not a substitute for the common open space and landscaping necessary for all housing.

7

There must be transparency: a clear commitment on all of these issues to equity.

URBAN DESIGN

A separate issue but one equally important to achieving integration with the existing community, is the built-form, the land-use mix, and the public domain.

Built – Form

This all looks hunky dory from the birds eye perspective included in the brochure: it is not!

Redfern/Waterloo is unique in the suite of inner City suburbs in being an extension of the City grid, giving it a particular geometric ordering of its street patterns. This was emulated by its nineteenth century development of terraces, particularly in Redfern, giving a formal beauty to its streets, unusual in Sydney. Some of the modern development has respected this, albeit with a step in scale which has enhanced the suburbs, providing a model for future development. The recent D o H infill in the Morehead Street precinct provides a good model; well done! BEP2 turns its back on this model.

The proposal lacks this understanding of the grain and texture, with its mishmash of discrete 'object' buildings aiming at variety but destroying the unity in diversity character of the established pattern. The C o S's Urban Design Studies as a prelude to the new City Plan understand this, after closely looking at the specifics. The designers in this instance, seem to have their heads' in overseas mags.

Height/Scale

The Plan continues the furphy of 'transition' between the existing texture of terraces and low rise (max 3 storeys), and the high rise. You cannot transition between the low and high extremes here; it will be an ugly compromise to attempt to do so. Better to achieve a generally low scale closely aligned and reinforcing the street pattern, and allow the contrast to remain. It is reasonable to step the scale and respect the streets, say to a maximum of 4 stories, and achieve a substantial lift in the density. This is reflected in the City Plan, and should be the controls for the estates. Planning is a level playing field. Differentiation is a recipe for a continued divide. With a four storey limit, FSR's of up to 2.5:1 are achievable (excluding the public domain). The height limit should be 12m.

Mixed Use/Active Frontages

It is desirable to introduce non-residential to the ground floor of the main street frontages to provide local services, employment, a lively street environment, and security. These are stated intentions, but there are no specifics. The how much and where must be identified to avoid the mistakes of the stated good intentions, evident in Pymont Ultimo as well as the new development areas in the former South Sydney Area.

Part of this intent should ensure as many dwellings as possible have direct access from the street frontages as well as open landscaped edges to the streets, not private courtyards; as suggested by the perspectives.

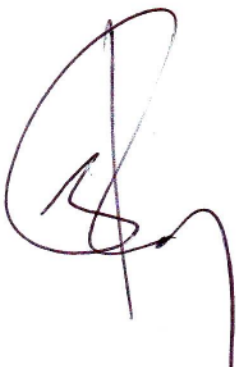
Balconies

Open glassed in balconies are rarely used; they are not private or protected enough, and are often a clutter of ugly outdoor stuff including huge BBQ's, and casual storage. Bikes are good but in designated and secure parking areas. Morehead Street seems to have got that right with mostly solid or opaque balustrading. Going a step further with operable screens makes these spaces more useful, and visually more interesting – genuine useable outdoor living spaces. The perspectives in the Plan, could be modern 'resort' styled development that could be anywhere in the world.

Conclusion

Leveraging the equity in the tired, inefficient, and somewhat obsolete housing estates in Redfern and Waterloo, is necessary, and requires some political courage. BEP 2 tackles this with some panache, but it is too loose a plan, does not respond to the local particulars, and lacks a commitment to use that equity to ensure true equity in terms of social housing and public infrastructure. The next phase, the Master Plan must do this, to be acceptable to this community.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in purple ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'B' followed by a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Bruce on behalf of Bruce and Sarah Lay.
(we have lived in Newtown/Darlington since 1978)