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Lithgow City Council
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8 April 2020

Submission on Draft Lithgow 2040 Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS) – Existing Rural Zoned land at River Lett Hill.

Reference is made to the above statement adopted by Council for public exhibition on 24 February 2020 (expires 9/4/20). It is noted that this is the first LSPS created by Council and that it is envisaged to come into effect by 1 July 2020.

This submission relates specifically to Planning Priority 3 (Plan & Appropriately Manage Rural Lifestyle Development). Please do not publish any personal information (name or address) in respect to this submission.

1. Appropriate Management

The fate of Rural-Residential land opportunities within the LGA has in recent times been inextricably linked with the completion of the beleaguered Lithgow Rural & Residential Strategy Land Study. This study, despite being commissioned some 5-6 years ago, has fallen by the wayside and has now been given a further reprieve by inclusion in this LSPS.

It is fair to say that Council has not ‘appropriately managed’ rural lifestyle development initiatives during this period in that it has not kept the public informed on the delivery of this study (minimal and outdated website updates), nor ensured that the study was conducted in an independent and transparent manner.

Self-interest aside, it must be better demonstrated that entrenched ideology & subjective points of view are not influencing the direction and content of this study. The study must be based on best practice planning principles and should, where those principles provide, seek to facilitate the views of the community. The outcomes that will be facilitated by the Rural & Residential Strategy will potentially affect hundreds of landowners and ratepayers and we request that the study and background work be undertaken by an independent consultant appointed by public tender without undue direct influence by councillors or council staff to ensure accountability and transparency.

The undertaking on Page 28 (Actions) to “complete and implement the Lithgow Rural & Residential Strategy over a short timeline” is therefore met with cautious optimism and is a definite improvement to the ‘ongoing’ timeline that has prevailed.

A ‘short’ timeline needs to be further quantified for transparency and accountability.

2. Supply & Demand Analysis

The statement that 'the LGA has an ample supply... remaining in existing large lot residential areas' is contentious and would seem to have been regurgitated from Council's position prior to the release of the Lithgow LEP 2014. Our response to the Draft LEP 2013 in respect to Supply & Demand (refer to [REDACTED] at that time) was not supported by Council. Greater transparency needs to be demonstrated to assure the public that best practice planning principles and current trends are being considered.

Essentially, we would contend that the slow uptake of existing large lot residential zoned land located adjacent to Wallerawang, Portland townships is curtailing the release of newer more Sydney-centric areas and misrepresenting the true market demand for these lifestyle blocks.

3. Agricultural suitability

The aforementioned Lithgow Rural & Residential Strategy Land Study was put on the back burner to enable agricultural mapping of rural land to be completed. It is understood that the findings of this mapping exercise were to better inform the Land Study going forward in relation to primary production suitability.

The results of this mapping exercise should be released to the public.

In closing we strongly urge Council to assign a high priority to the completion of the Lithgow Rural & Residential Strategy Land Study and to release a draft for public exhibition. This will ensure that the community is re-engaged with the process.

Yours faithfully

[REDACTED]