

THE PADDINGTON SOCIETY Inc.
For Community and Heritage
Est 1964

The General Manager
Woollahra Municipal Council
PO Box 61, Double Bay NSW 1360

26 May 2023

Draft Woollahra Community Participation Plan 2019 (Amendment 1) – Your Say

On behalf of the members of the Paddington Society we record our great concern regarding Council's proposal re the above Draft (Amendment 1) to no longer advertise DAs in the Wentworth Courier.

We believe that Council's Resolution of 27 March 2023 directly contravenes the objectives most prominently set out in the Introduction to the current Participation Plan, adopted in November 2019, after extensive consultation with the Community.

To quote:

Community participation is a priority for Council

Community participation is vital to support transparent and appropriate planning and development outcomes that are informed by an engaged community.

Goal 10: Working together

Woollahra will be a place where residents are well informed and able to contribute to their community. Council will listen and respond to requests and concerns through open communication and engagement.

Goal 11: A Well Managed Council

Woollahra Council will be open and accountable to all stakeholders, encourage participation in decision making and make decisions that are in the public interest. Through effective long-term planning, we will develop and implement strategies and ensure ongoing resources to fulfil long-term community goals.

The Society records our concerns that:

- If adopted, Amendment 1 will greatly reduce community participation and engagement.
- Council can undertake few more important and significant forms of community engagement than communicating as widely as possible with all constituents, residents and workers in the LGA concerning developments which can - and will - impact on their homes and workplaces, their amenities and those of their neighbours.
- Advertising in the Wentworth Courier *or* in Council's Mayoral column on how and where to find new Development Applications and Development Application Determinations on Council's website is entirely insufficient to meet the goals quoted above.
- As well, the Resolution fails to meet considerable numbers of the Community participation principles for Equity and Access articulated on Pages 9 and 10 of the current Plan.
- The on-line process appears deceptively simple, but for assessment of relevant impacts requires *far more* than the three steps outlined in the recent response by Councillor Silcocks (2 May 2023) to the Darling Point Society, Cc-ed to all Councillors and a few concerned residents.

- The process *sounds* straightforward for those able, willing and with sufficient time to seek the listing of new DAs for particular, or several, notification periods, but to discover meaningful information, searchers need to: look at a map to find the relevant locations / go to DA Tracking for any (or many) DAs which may be of interest or concern / proceed to download the Notification drawings (see below for the deficiencies and limitations of these) and then download and decipher the many documents which actually describe the proposal.
- A very small group of experienced volunteer committee members from the Paddington Society and other resident groups spend many days each week determining the potential impacts of proposals on surrounding properties and local precincts in their suburb and further afield. We cannot communicate our concerns and objections re the large numbers of non-compliant DA proposals to all of our membership - and beyond into our wider communities.
- Community members should not need to make such weekly searches on a website to discover new DAs which could affect them. Many in the community do not have the resources, computer skills or the time for such discoveries. *The proposal to discontinue advertising is far from inclusive.*
- DA postal notifications are circulated only to a relatively narrow circle of surrounding properties; post is slow, deliveries have become increasingly irregular, partly triggered by Covid restrictions, and the Proposal descriptions and reduced scale drawings are very limited and often misleading.
- Notices on front fences are even more limited in providing information; they are very frequently removed as soon as the formal notification period permits, and frequently missed by passers-by.
- If advertising is discontinued, those who don't receive notifications *and* those who, for any of the above reasons, cannot or do not send submissions, will not discover whether DAs have received consent or, more rarely, been refused. They will only discover that nearby works are to commence when hoardings are erected or when works actually commence on site. They will have no idea of the scale or value of the works, what has been approved or conditioned for change, the likely duration of neighbourhood impacts and whether what is built corresponds with what has been approved – often years after consent was issued.
- Many engaged members of the community - not only surrounding neighbours - are concerned about impacts of developments in their streets and precincts, *and* in areas which have flow-on impacts relating to demolition of significant structures, traffic and parking changes etc.
- In the densely populated building environments of Paddington, Edgecliff, Woollahra, and to a slightly lesser extent Darling Point, large DA impacts are particularly far reaching, including excavation and noise impacts far beyond directly neighbouring properties, on-going parking reductions in streets and lanes due to work zones, skips and trade and delivery vehicles etc.
- The worthy targets by all levels of government to create more housing developments have impacts far beyond the immediate neighbourhoods of those in close proximity.
- However, particularly in recent years, an increasing proportion of DAs in Woollahra propose inappropriate overdevelopment of properties and sites which have greatly increased in value.
- The very high commercial stakes for such proposals are likely contributors to the increased numbers of deemed refusals in the last two quarters.
- The additional two-week delay associated with advertising in the Courier does not appear to have been demonstrated in the listings appearing in a recent Register of Current Land & Environment Court Matters for Development Applications (EP Agenda 7 Nov 2022).

- The Society is therefore reluctant to accept that the additional two-week delay in processing applications is a valid reason for no longer advertising DAs in the Wentworth Courier.
- Nor do we believe that providing a saving of \$150,000 per year in the context of Council's annual budget expenditure is a valid reason.

CONCLUSION:

It is a great irony that Council's Your Say page has very recently closed the consultation period for the **Draft Community Engagement Strategy** to: **Have your say on how we engage with you.**

- Advertising DAs in a weekly newspaper delivered to every building in the LGA is one of the most effective means of Community Engagement; it enables Council to:
(quotes from that document follow)
- **Hear from a range of voices so that everyone has the opportunity to express their views**
and
- **Enhance community ownership and acceptance of planning decisions and outcomes**

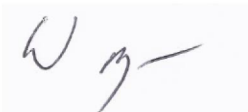
The Draft Woollahra Community Participation Plan 2019 (Amendment 1)

- Is not transparent.
- Will not support or foster an engaged community.
- Reduces the community's capacity to become well informed.
- Removes opportunities for open communication and engagement.
- Is not open and accountable to all stakeholders.

Amendment 1 is definitely not in the public interest.

On behalf of our members, the overall Paddington community and the many communities in the LGA, we sincerely request that Council re-considers proceeding with the Amendment.

Yours faithfully



**Will Mrongovius,
President
The Paddington Society**

per Esther Hayter
M: 0411 109 770