

Urban Design Framework Project

ORD 12 which will be discussed tonight, seeks approval of funding for an Urban Design Framework Project for the Camden Heritage Conservation Area, including a review of the LEP and DCP controls. The preferred tender is that of McGregor Coxall who are no doubt excellent at what they do. However they are also proponents of a modernist design approach, and they make no claims to have particular heritage expertise.

The Macarthur brothers in 1836, along with Surveyor General Thomas Mitchell, used nineteenth century design criteria that have stood the test of time, and which are integral to Camden's heritage value. Only the most knowledgeable and independent heritage architect can professionally comment on any potential improvements to the Camden townscape.

This project, which has arisen out of the new 2015 Vision for the town centre, has potentially damaging ramifications. It is also premature, when Council elections are so close and the town centre works are so contentious.

The community, as Councillors would be well aware from the media coverage, public meeting and rally, considers the "consultation" for the Vision, as a tokenistic tick a box exercise.

Indeed academic research ¹ into the consultation found that Council:

- did not undertake early and meaningful engagement in the decision making process
- had not convinced stakeholders that the planning proposals were consistent with the town centre's heritage values and its historic significance.
- had not convinced the community that the works decisions were not already made prior to consultation
- had created a trust deficit within the community

In fact it did not meet the "consultation" definition on the widely recognised participation spectrum² as it did not provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision-making.

Further the Vision is non-evidenced based, as it does not provide analyses of community input or other data in relation to the statements it makes, including that economic viability is somehow constrained by height and heritage protections. The protections only constrain the type of development, ones that will impact on the unique, increasingly rare, human-scale townscape. The only people who may be in favour of higher rise and higher density development in a heritage precinct would be property owners, more particularly perhaps, recent property owners who may be counting on the foreshadowing of a relaxation of heritage controls.

A lot of democratic effort was put into legislating the heritage conservation area. The Camden community would never suggest increasing the height limit or amending the heritage protections.

¹ Willis Ian (Feb 2016) *Force or farce Community consultation in local government*
https://www.academia.edu/26423228/Force_or_farce_Community_consultation_in_local_government

² International Association for Public Participation Australasia (2016) <https://www.iap2.org.au/resources/public-participation-spectrum>

They give Councillors the grounds to reject inappropriate attempts to compromise Camden's valued heritage and character.

The tender brief itself is also of concern because it does not indicate that data from community engagement will be collected as part of the project's methodology, nor that the community's views will inform the project findings.

In your deliberations on this item please consider what actual evidence you have to support spending other people's money on this project, particularly at this stage of the electoral cycle.

Please vote to reject ORD 12 or defer its consideration until after September. Thank you.