

15 November 2019

The General Manager
Cumberland Council
1 Susan Street
Auburn
NSW 2144

For the attention of: Daniel Cavallo, Director Environment and Planning

Dear Sir

**PLANNING PROPOSAL: 2-36 CHURCH STREET, LIDCOMBE
VPA STRATEGY**

INTRODUCTION

The Billbergia Group (Proponent) has entered into arrangements with NSW Government (Land and Housing Corporation) (Land Owner) to deliver a high quality social and private housing development on land located adjacent to the Lidcombe Town Centre and adjacent to the Lidcombe Train Station, at 2-36 Church St, Lidcombe. This falls within the LAHC's Communities Plus strategy to deliver additional very low income and low income (Social) housing and more generally to increase housing supply.

A development application that is consistent with existing town planning controls is currently being assessed by Cumberland Council and Billbergia has committed to a fixed delivery time frame from when the development application is approved.

The size (10,142.7m²), location and orientation of the property provide a unique opportunity for an appropriate uplift in residential density and height, along with the delivery of significant additional public/community benefits, at no cost to local government.

We refer to the attached Planning Proposal (PP) and further set out, in this letter, an associated strategy to enter into a Voluntary Planning Agreement (VPA), whereby the Billbergia Group can commit to the delivery of key additional social and community infrastructure in the vicinity of the property.

The Billbergia Group has a proven track record of delivering high quality developments along with key elements of community infrastructure. Billbergia views this Lidcombe property and the presented initiative as providing a unique, once-off opportunity to appropriately unlock and optimise the further potential land yield to the benefit of the stakeholders. The size of the property, position adjacent to the train station and on the northern side of the train line and the location being immediately adjacent to the town centre, all appear to meet with fundamental planning principles and justify the approach taken.

We request that Council consider this PP and VPA proposal and provide direction to enable the parties to progress to deliver on this new vision. In progressing this matter, we also ask for Council to consider the existing short delivery timeframe that the Proponent and Land Owner have committed to in relation to the complying DA and for Council's assistance in efficiently making its determinations in relation to the PP and the VPA.

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DEVELOPMENT OVERVIEW

The associated Planning Proposal seeks consent for a justifiable increase in density and height, within the existing building footprints of the currently contemplated and complying residential development DA.

The outcomes sought to be delivered include a redevelopment of the land to accommodate high quality residential apartments, incorporating some very low income and low income (social) and other private housing along with the delivery of key community infrastructure that is discussed in more detail below.

The property is a key, large and consolidated land holding, immediately adjacent to and a gateway to the Lidcombe Town Centre and train station. We consider that the development proposal successfully integrates with surrounding land uses, activates and enhances adjoining public domain and provides an opportunity for delivery of a significant weighting of public benefits, including additional public housing, to the Lidcombe community.

The Planning Proposal considers variations to the current HOB standards under Clause 4.3 of the Auburn Local Environmental Plan 2010 (ALEP 2010) and to the current FSR standards under Clause 4.4 of the ALEP 2010. The proposed amendments to Auburn LEP 2010 are listed in Table 1.

Table 1 – Proposed amendments to Auburn LEP 2010

Development Control	Existing Max. Planning Controls	Proposed Planning Controls (with greater potential)	Lidcombe Town Centre Planning Controls (Max.) from Town Centres Strategy
Height of Buildings (HOB) Building A Building B Building C Building D	14.9 metres 16.9 metres 22.9 metres 27 metres	22 metres 44 metres 53 metres 53 metres	60m
Floor Space Ratio (FSR) Property area: 10,142.7m ²	1.29:1 1.49:1 2.49:1 2.6:1	4.21:1	5:1

Please refer to the Planning Proposal and supporting documents for further information.

VPA STRATEGY & PUBLIC BENEFITS

Whilst the current, complying DA provides for some social housing and other public benefits, Billbergia now proposes to deliver; public infrastructure, to the benefit of the existing and future Lidcombe community, additional social housing and additional private housing by entering into a VPA with Council.

From an initial review of the needs of the Lidcombe community, Billbergia proposes the following list of benefits that can be selected for delivery, subject to the extent of an approved Planning Proposal:

- Additional social housing units (being a priority for the Land Owner (LAHC));
- Public open space increase, embellishment and dedication;
- Public domain upgrades to Church Street, including traffic flow improvements and pedestrian safety through road crossings and walkway improvements;
- Long day care centre (minimum of 60 places); and
- Community hub/ incubator space (approx. 175m²).

We consider that some or all of these items will deliver meaningful public benefit within the area.

To measure the monetary value of these items and to determine the extent that the planning proposal can support them, Billbergia anticipate working with Council through the process that is set out in the Council's VPA Policy (adopted by Council on 6 September 2017) to guide the preparation of VPAs under Subdivision 2 of Division 6 of Part 4 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act).

Upon independent determination of the value of any land uplift to be gained from the planning proposal, Billbergia intends to prepare and submit a more detailed letter of offer and a VPA that addresses the proportionate share of the land value uplift along with a corresponding allocation of the component of land value attributable towards items of public benefit. This formal offer will be submitted to Council, at an appropriate time, for Council's consideration in accordance with Council's adopted policy.

The above-mentioned items of public benefit are described further below:

Additional very low income and low income social housing units

In addition to supporting the NSW Government's overall housing targets, the provision of social housing provides accommodation that is affordable for low and very low income earners, a cohort of the community where there is a significant identified need. The provision of social housing accommodation is a fundamental objective of the Land Owner (LAHC) through the Communities Plus scheme.

Cumberland Council, alike, has a clear policy to target the delivery of more affordable housing that satisfies the demand within the Local Government Area.

The provision of additional and well managed social housing will deliver significant public benefit that is aligned with both the Council's and with the State Government's policies.

It is intended that the social housing units will be owned by the State Government and operated by an independent operator.

Public Park

In addition to the currently considered pocket park, the Planning Proposal considers incorporating the existing road median strip into the park by realigning Church Street. This has the potential to deliver up to 2,000m² of public open green space and embellished park.

The new park in this location will deliver significant public benefit in an area that is in need of more community open space.

Refer to Appendix A – Public Park and Child Care Centre Plan, prepared by Oculus Landscape Architects.

Long Day Care Childcare Centre

Council has identified a need for additional long day care availability in the area.

The long day care childcare facility will have a minimum capacity for 60 children and will be designed and delivered to Council's needs. It is anticipated that Council will own and operate the completed facility.

Increasing the number of childcare spaces in the local area, within a new purpose-built building in close proximity to public transport, a new public park and the town centre will provide significant public benefit. It will also provide a valuable community asset.

Refer to Appendix A – Public Park and Child Care Centre Plan, prepared by Oculus Landscape Architects.

If Council identifies there exists no demand for a childcare then the monetary equivalent can be offered as part of this VPA.

Public domain upgrades

Proposed public domain upgrades can include; introducing a roundabout at the Martin Street intersection, upgrades to the public domain along the southern side of Church Street and landscaping of the northern side of Church Street between Bachell Avenue and Swete Street.

The upgrades can address better traffic flow and, most importantly, provide safer pedestrian road crossings and day/night pedestrian access to the train station.

Refer to Appendix B – Church Street Public Domain Upgrade, prepared by Oculus Landscape Architects.

Community hub space

A community hub space (of approximately 175m²) can be located adjacent to the proposed long day care childcare facility and therefore in close proximity to the Lidcombe Town Centre and train station. It is proposed that the community hub would be a smaller version of the existing Auburn Centre for Community and operated by Council.

The co-location of a variety of facilities, spaces and equipment to cater for community group meetings and activities, art and cultural uses, co-working/business incubator spaces, etc. is considered a significant community benefit. The facility would provide the Lidcombe community with a central point to access a range of facilities and services, whilst enabling opportunities for collaboration between users of the space. This facility will fill an existing gap in the local area.

Refer Appendix C – Community Hub Space Plan, prepared by Oculus Landscape Architects.

If Council identifies there exists no demand for community hub space then the monetary equivalent can be offered as part of this VPA.

Other Benefits

We understand that Council may have alternate public benefits that are more specific to Lidcombe and which Council wishes to be delivered through a planning proposal and VPA structure. Those elements could include, for example, other community facilities aligned with Council's Draft Cumberland Community Facilities Strategy 2019-2029 or other social infrastructure, either provided on the site as works in kind or contributions towards co-located facilities in the Lidcombe Town Centre, such as the library.

Subject to clear direction and the value capacity of the planning proposal, Billbergia is willing to investigate those initiatives and to report back to Council with a more formal proposal that matches the planning proposal.

The delivery of public benefits is only limited by the extent of justifiable uplift in value determined through the Planning Proposal and Billbergia would like to work with Council to achieve an optimal outcome in this regard.

CONCLUSION

The dynamics of the property located at 2-36 Church St, Lidcombe present clear opportunity and justification for a planning proposal and associated Voluntary Planning Agreement to deliver significant public/ community benefit in the Lidcombe Town Centre area.

The scope of delivery of public benefits is only limited by the extent of the planning proposal and the allocated land uplift value.



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Billbergia presents as a low-risk, credible property group and has the proven track record to deliver quality built form, including social infrastructure, under project delivery agreements and voluntary planning agreements.

The Planning Proposal and associated provision of public benefits align with Billbergia's motto, being: "*creating communities*".

Achieving increased low income social housing and significant community benefits meets with the objectives of both Council and the Landowner.

Billbergia request formal approval from Council to progress open negotiations, in accordance with Council's policies, in relation to agreeing a VPA that aligns with the Planning Proposal and with Council's preferences for items of public benefit.

We look forward to receiving your direction on the matter.

Yours Sincerely

John Kinsella AM
Managing Director
Billbergia Group

CC Hamish McNulty, General Manager
Brooke Endycotte, Director Community Development

Appendices

Appendix A – Public Park and Child Care Centre Plan, prepared by Oculus Landscape Architects.

Appendix B – Church Street Public Domain Upgrades, prepared by Oculus Landscape Architects.

Appendix C – Community Hub Space Plan, prepared by Oculus Landscape Architects.