

23 February 2024

Planning NSW  
Diverse and Well Located Homes SEPP

Dear Sir/Madam

Glebe is located only three kilometres from the Sydney CBD. It is a high density nineteenth century suburb which predominantly comprises terrace houses on small blocks.



Figure 1 St Phillips estate Glebe, c. 1930 (State Library of NSW)



Figure 2 The proposed SEPP includes all of Glebe. Most of the suburb will have a six-storey height limit, as highlighted in dark mauve on the map (image courtesy of Council of Sydney)

As shown in figure 2 above, all of Glebe will be included in the SEPP and the six storey height limit and 3:1 FSR will apply to most of the suburb.

Subdivision of Glebe commenced in 1828 and most of the housing was erected between 1830 and 1900. Additional density has been added since the 1980s through tailored planning including sensitively designed low rise infill in the 1980s and two master planned developments on the perimeter of Glebe at Harold Park and the Glebe Affordable Housing Scheme in Elgar Street.

In Glebe 47.2% of dwellings are terrace houses or semi-detached houses, 5.0% are free standing houses and 46.0% are apartments. In the vicinity of 4,000 dwellings have been added to Glebe since 1980 without destroying its character. This has only been achieved through careful planning, not the broad-brush approach envisaged in the SEPP. With only 5% of Glebe as free standing housing, the SEPP will not achieve its desired effect of creating more housing. The inherent constraints are too great.

The SEPP is intended to apply to the Greater Sydney region. It may work well in suburbs which largely comprise free standing cottages on large blocks and have a single town centre around a railway station but it is inherently problematical in a mature inner-city suburb like Glebe with very small block sizes, attached dwellings and historic building fabric. The six storey height limits are inappropriate for most of Glebe and inclusion of FSR as a non-refusable standard will produce unintended and undesirable consequences.

It is important to come back to first principles – what is the objective of the SEPP? The SEPP aims to increase the supply of housing.

The City of Sydney LGA is quite different from most of the other LGAs in Greater Sydney, the Hunter, Central Coast and Illawarra Shoalhaven. It is a physically small LGA which comprises mature nineteenth century suburbs with small block sizes, a number of high rise residential areas and some brownfield sites which could become residential.

Increasing the housing supply in Sydney requires sophisticated planning which can identify the different opportunities, potential, form and solutions for increasing density in different parts of the city while at the same time respecting character, topography, identity and making a positive contribution to the liveability of the city as a whole.

The Council of Sydney has some of Australia's most talented planners and urbanists on its staff. It has great intellectual capital and it has a track record of delivering on its housing targets. This is a real asset for the State government. Instead of applying a SEPP which won't work in increasing the housing supply in the Sydney LGA (because of the mismatch between the strategy and the city's urban form) the State government should set a housing target for the City and let its planners work out the best way of delivering it.

The Glebe Society recommends that the State exempt the Sydney Local Government Area from the SEPP but set housing targets for the LGA to ensure the City does its bit to alleviate the housing crisis.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Duncan Leys', written in a cursive style.

Duncan Leys  
President