

BCC wages war of words with State Government over development delays

Slow going over plans under fire

Chris Herde

FOR some it's an exercise in democracy, for others it's an overly drawn-out process that they argue has stopped development in its tracks.

Regardless, Brisbane's neighbourhood planning process has sparked a war of words between the State Government and Brisbane City Council, with many developers and residents left in limbo.

Prompted by the SEQ Regional Plan, which has called for 156,000 new dwellings in Brisbane by 2031, the process has the potential to change the face of Brisbane.

But for many areas, especially in the inner city, the plans mean higher buildings and greater-density living which goes hand-in-hand with local resident angst and political imperatives.

At the coalface, Ellivo Architects director Scott Whiteoak claims there appears to be a general "lack of urgency" among authorities to sign off on the plans, of which only 12 have so far been formally adopted.

"Developers are sitting on their hands awaiting the approval of new densities that would make projects feasible," he said.

"We have more than half a dozen clients currently waiting for local area planning to be resolved. These delays are having a vast impact on development decision-making.

"The cost of holding their land indefinitely is hurting developers, but it is also contributing to the steady increase in costs of development and directly impacting affordability of housing in the future."

Mr Whiteoak said the contentious South Brisbane Riverside Local Area Plan took almost six years to be formally adopted. The issue was building

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heights but a compromise finally was being achieved, with some areas allowing 30-storey buildings and others six storeys.

Mr Whiteoak said that during the long process the initial three-storey limit still applied, which ensured any developer wanting to build a taller building would be knocked back.

"No landholder is going to build a three-storey building on their land if the proposed local area plan indicates they will be able to achieve to six storeys," he said.

"The trouble is that it was a long time coming."

Mr Whiteoak said authorities should strive for more certainty and pointed out that the State Government had initiated the Urban Land Development Authority to bypass the local area planning process.

"The remedy to the situation is for a politician to get up and say there should be an end date," he said.

"At the moment there are no repercussions if these things drag on for another two to three years."

The 33 local plans have, or are still negotiating, a long and involved path.

The process starts with the BCC doing a draft strategy which goes to the community for informal consultation.

After receiving feedback, the BCC prepares a statutory plan that goes through council and then is sent to the State Government's Department of Local Government and Planning for the first State Interest Review.

The Government then sends it back with changes to the draft plan or leaves it alone and then the plan goes out again to the community for formal submissions.

The BCC refines the plan and it's sent back to the DLGP for a second State Interest Review.



SLOW GOING: Ellivo Architects director Scott Whiteoak at Boundary and Melbourne streets, South Brisbane, where the local area plan took almost six years to be formally adopted. **Picture:** Phillip Norrish

Again it is sent back with or without changes for the BCC to refine it for formal adoption.

Local neighbourhood plans that have successfully negotiated this process are: Acacia Ridge/Archerfield, Bracken Ridge and District, Centenary Suburbs, City Centre, Eastern Corridor, Fortitude Valley, Milton, South Brisbane, Nudgee Beach, Lutwyche Road Corridor and Wynnum Manly.

The BCC's Neighbourhood

Planning and Development Assessment chairwoman Amanda Cooper blames the State Government for delays.

"We would like the State Government to speed up their part of the process," Cr Cooper said.

"We've asked them to hurry up but they say they are very short on resources and that's why plans take so long."

Cr Cooper said having two State Interest Reviews was com-

pletely unnecessary. "Two is a waste of time and we think it doesn't add any more to the process," she said.

"Some of these plans have been with the State Government for over a year."

Cr Cooper said the BCC was a "creature of the State Government" and had to negotiate the legislation and processes that were foisted on it.

"The State Government are the ones who need to improve

their timeframe," she said.

"The BCC is working hard and is engaging with communities and coming up with plans (but) the State Government is then slowing the process down."

"We specifically set our teams up to make sure we are processing things as quickly as we possibly can because we recognise the pressure it's putting on the development industry and the community.

"I don't think any other local

State of play

The state of Brisbane local neighbourhood plans:

Almost done ...

- Kangaroo Point
- Sherwood/Graceville District
- New Farm/Teneriffe

Some way to go ...

- Mitchelton Centre
- Richlands/Wacol Corridor
- Racecourse Precinct
- Cherriside Centre
- Indooroopilly Centre
- Bulimba District
- Lower Oxley Creek
- Rochedale
- Mt Gravatt Corridor
- Toowong/Auchenflower
- Yeerongpilly

Don't even think about ...

- Paradise Wetlands
- Moggill/Bellbowrie District
- Pinkenba/Eagle Farm
- River Gateway
- Darra Oxley District
- Taringa/St Lucia
- Toombul/Nundah

government has a track record such the Brisbane City Council to develop the State Government's own regional plan."

But a DLGP spokesman refused to take the blame for any delays.

He called on the BCC to consult more with the State Government to help smooth over the State Interest Review process.

"The BCC does not liaise with state agencies until the formal submission of any planning scheme amendment," he said.

"The (BCC) administration has instructed their staff not to consult with state agencies in the preparation of these documents. This usually results in lengthy delays during the review process."

The DLGP spokesman said the department had 70 planning staff across Queensland working with councils as direct client managers.