



PRESERVING OUR HERITAGE

P.O. BOX 85, HUNTERS HILL, N.S.W. 2110

## OPEN LETTER TO HUNTERS HILL COUNCILLORS

23 February 2015

Dear Councillors,

It is with regret that The Trust has learned of the sale of properties owned by the people of Hunters Hill, including No 10 Cowell Street and the open-air carpark within the Gladesville Shopping Village (GSV) site.

According to Mayor Richard Quinn, the Call Option was exercised on 8 February 2016 and signed off by him and the general manager under delegated authority with a settlement date of 4 April 2016. As far as we can tell, there has been no public announcement of this to date.

The finalisation of the sale means that Hunters Hill Council has formally signed away any leverage it might have had in the development of the GSV site. The knowledge that this was on the cards from the beginning has led the developer to prepare a *Planning Proposal* that trashes the existing planning controls in the LEP and DCP. The *Proposal* is for an entirely inappropriate development that consists of a clutch of very tall buildings that will have a seriously negative impact on the amenity of the neighbourhood in terms of increased traffic, parking problems, overshadowing and overlooking.

As The Trust has noted a number of times, Council has ignored its responsibility to look after its own heritage at 10 Cowell St. It has procrastinated for over 10 years following the 2005 Davies report that recommended upgrading the listing of 10 Cowell St to Schedule 5 in the LEP. To add insult to injury, when the listing was finalised, The Trust was shocked to discover that it excluded the curtilage of the property. This is unique for a Schedule 5 property listing in Hunters Hill's LEP.

The exclusion of the curtilage was designed to allow the developer to remove the house from the site and erect it somewhere else. It was to ensure that heritage issues did not interfere with the overall development of the site. It has meant the density of the site's development will be maximized and has precluded the possibility of a lower scale development that is nuanced by the retention of the historic cottage.

Predictably this listing will inevitably lead to a further proposal down the track along the lines of: *"following close investigation of the property, our heritage advisor has, unfortunately, determined that the condition of the cottage at 10 Cowell St is such that it cannot be moved"*.

The Council has never explained what its real intentions have been in relation to the GSV site and it has operated in a fog of secrecy, procrastination and misinformation verging on deceit. It is now clear that Council's only goal was to get what it considered to be the best price for the sale of its properties on the site. This intention has never been part of any public discussion. Also, as far as we can tell, the sale was never part of any open tender process, so we don't even know if Council got the best possible price.

Why has it come to this? It seems the only reason is that Council desperately wanted the money. After months of being kept in the dark, we now know the sale price is a measly \$9.5 million. From this sum all the associated costs need to be deleted. This is an incredibly low dollar compensation for the havoc

that this development will cause.

We believe that Council's actions in this fiasco have clearly indicated that it does not have the capacity to properly manage large scale development within the municipality and that it is incapable of protecting its own heritage. This last sends an unfortunate message to all those would-be developers, including householders, who see heritage as an impediment to their grand designs. *"If Council itself can do it, why can't we?"*

Finally, there remains the insidious implication that heritage is less important west of the overpass and consequently that this is where Council can more readily concentrate Hunters Hill's required high-density development without too much of a citizen backlash.

Councillors should be clear that this sell-off is probably the most significant of a number of reasons why The Trust has lost its enthusiasm for actively supporting Council in its fight to remain a stand-alone entity.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tony Coote". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the beginning.

Tony Coote  
President  
The Hunters Hill Trust