

Development Advisory and Assessment Policy

Background:

Inner West Council is in the process of integrating the development assessment systems of the former Leichhardt, Marrickville and Ashfield councils to achieve consistency across the local government area. Undertaking this significant task is providing Council with the opportunity to contemporize, update and make provision for innovation within the integrated system. Basic principles such as assessing development applications (DA's) on their merit, and having regard to the provisions of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979, will however remain in place.

At the same time as *systems* are being integrated, Council is seeking to improve the development application and assessment *process* to enhance customer service, including through accelerated Development Application (DA) processing times. The first phase of this initiative focuses on the upfront **pre-lodgement, lodgement and post-lodgement steps** of the development application process. Re-structuring these steps is essential to achieving performance improvement overall because they underpin the efficiency and effectiveness of every stage of the assessment process.

To this end, Council is proposing greater emphasis on upfront consultation with, and education of, applicants. A dedicated pre-lodgement team is to be established, staffed by skilled planners trained in customer support.

The team will provide a range of pre-lodgement services including: Advisory, Education, Guidelines, Formal feedback, Amendments, and Design advice.

The subsequent application lodgement process will be rigorous as a result of trained lodgement officers accepting complete applications only per checklists provided at the pre-lodgement stage.

Customers will be advised at lodgement that amendments to plans are strongly discouraged, and may not be possible, once the assessment process has commenced.

Should applications be found to be deficient once assessment has commenced, provision will be made for further information to be provided only where this is minor and can be easily and rapidly submitted. Where major deficiencies are identified, the applicant will be invited to withdraw the application, or the application will be refused.

By avoiding delays at and following lodgement, and *by limiting requests for further information* by Council officers in particular, the assessment process will be streamlined overall.

Council invites your comments with regard to the Development Advisory and Assessment Process Improvement Policy Phase 1. Please provide any feedback no later than close of business, **1 May 2017**.