

Hasty retreat hides truth at Council

A third deadline for objections to a “cheap, prefabricated new housing estate” at Woronora waterfront has been set by Sutherland Shire Council, having twice retreated under pressure from locals. Residents were only told of a 14-day deadline just 13 days after it began.

The plan was first advertised for objections during school holidays, without full details of this “no-frills Legoland”, as it was called.

“This dodgy secrecy is to hide the truth from the public,” according to the Woronora Valley Residents Association Inc’s Vice President, Don Page, in a news statement.

The first February-8 deadline was slipped past locals with no hint of the size of the planned new housing estate with its container-like cabins.

Councillors are “fast-tracking it by stealth until it is too late”, he said.

“This Legoland would be Woronora’s first no-frills, medium-density estate by the water, looking like double-stacked containers with fibro/tin walls and roof.”

For now, only one two-storey cabin is proposed at the current Woronora caravan park by the waterfront, but it is subject to flooding and is a “prohibited” development (DA18/0049).

A 14-day extension was sought for objections, and granted by council, but notification was delayed until day-13 to residents, who were “furious” when told.

“That left only one day to inform people, to write objections and get them to Council – not the 14 days we were promised.”

Further complaints drew another backdown by councillors, he said. A third deadline was then extended from one day to one week only, Thursday 1 March, with full details still withheld from the community.

SLAB FIT FOR A BLOCK OF FLATS

“The haste and secrecy of councillors to please big developers is blatant now,” Mr Page said. A two-storey cabin of fibro/tin has been proposed as a “display home” on the first of 67 sites on the 9,000-sq-metre land, sold for \$6.75million in mid-2016 to Wattle Residential Parks Pty Ltd.

It is a “temporary” display, consisting of two stacked container-like cabins, on an oversized concrete slab, 1.2metres deep and three times the area of the prefabricated building. Unlike normal housing, it is exempt from quality standards in the rest of Woronora.

“The slab suits a block of flats, not a temporary cabin,” said Mr Page. “That worries us, and our councillors are telling us nothing.”

No details have been received from Crs John Riad (Liberal), Steve Simpson (Ind.) and Deputy-Mayor Peter Scaysbrook (Labor), with no replies to emails on this issue.

The company is in the business of converting caravan parks into low-cost new housing estates for investors to buy, according to the LinkedIn website of a director. The current Woronora caravan sites are only on lease to tenants, not for sale.

“This looks like the first of 67 cheap, two-storey containers on flood-prone land, to get around the Shire’s rubbery planning code, LEP2015,” Mr Page predicted.

“They are so lightweight, they could float,” he believed.

“Paddles are part of the sales package, we hear.”

Complaints have criticised the lack of detail on the full extent of ‘Legoland’, with planning kept secret between Council and the developers, until too late for objections.

“The State Government will rubber-stamp Legoland, once councillors lay the foundations,” Mr Page forecast.

Details are on the WVRA website www.woronoravalley.com 24 February 2018