



25 February 2026

Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure
Locked Bag 5022
Parramatta NSW 2124
Submission by email: nsw-strategic-planning-projects@planning.nsw.gov.au

Dear Planning Reform team

The Australian Institute of Architects (the Institute) NSW Chapter welcomes the opportunity to comment on the NSW Government's proposed strategic planning reforms, including *A New Approach to Strategic Planning*, the *Draft Sydney Plan*, and the *Statewide Policy for Industrial Lands*.

The Institute supports the Government's intent to simplify the strategic planning framework, strengthen alignment across planning tiers, and accelerate the delivery of housing, infrastructure and employment land. We acknowledge the ambition of establishing a clearer three-tiered framework underpinned by seven statewide priorities and recognise the importance of these priorities cascading coherently into regional and land-use strategies.

As the peak body representing architects, the Institute's interest lies in ensuring these reforms not only deliver speed and certainty, but also embed design quality, climate responsiveness, liveability and long-term public value as core outcomes of NSW's planning system. These objectives are consistent with the Australian Government's *National Urban Policy*, which emphasises integrated planning, climate resilience and well-designed, liveable communities as essential to sustainable urban growth.

A Shared Strategic Framework

We support the Government's move toward a more integrated and streamlined strategic planning framework and consider it appropriate that these three exhibition documents be read together:

- *A New Approach to Strategic Planning* establishes the overarching framework and statewide priorities.
- the *Draft Sydney Plan* applies those priorities at a regional scale.
- the *Statewide Policy for Industrial Lands* gives land-use expression to those priorities within a critical economic sector.



This integrated structure presents a significant opportunity for NSW to embed design-led, place-based outcomes early in strategic planning rather than relying on later development assessment processes to resolve issues of quality, amenity and performance.

However, the role of architects and the value of design quality are not explicitly articulated across the documents. Given the Government's objectives relating to housing delivery, productivity, sustainability and community wellbeing, this represents a missed opportunity to position design as a core implementation mechanism.

The Institute recommends that the final framework explicitly recognise design quality and architectural expertise as essential to achieving strategic planning outcomes.

Seven Statewide Priorities

The Institute supports the use of the seven statewide priorities as a unifying framework and recommends the final strategy clearly articulate how design quality contributes to delivering each priority.

1. **Aboriginal Outcomes:** Architects work with Traditional Owners from project inception to support Country-centred design, cultural narratives and meaningful engagement through co-design practices. In NSW this work is guided by the Government Architect NSW *Connecting with Country Framework*. Strategic planning should embed these principles early to ensure culturally responsive place outcomes.
2. **Housed:** Meeting housing targets at scale requires more than yield. Design-led approaches enable diverse housing typologies, including the missing middle, adaptability over time, and housing that supports health and wellbeing.
3. **Prosperous:** Well-designed buildings and precincts attract investment, support innovation and generate long-term economic value. Industrial and employment lands benefit from design that enables flexibility, mixed-use outcomes and employment diversity.
4. **Connected:** Architects contribute to integrated land-use and transport outcomes through precinct-scale thinking that supports walkability, access to services and high-quality public realm connections.
5. **Resilient:** Architects embed sustainability and climate responsiveness into the fabric of urban development. Strategic plans should explicitly link resilience objectives to building performance, lifecycle outcomes, net-zero emissions pathways and urban heat mitigation.



6. **Liveable:** Liveability is shaped by the quality of buildings, streets and public spaces. Good design is a critical enabler of social cohesion, safety and community wellbeing.
7. **Coordinated:** Architects routinely work across disciplines and scales, supporting coordination between infrastructure, land use and community outcomes. Strategic planning should leverage this integrative capability earlier in decision-making.

Implications for the Draft Sydney Plan

The *Draft Sydney Plan* provides an opportunity to translate statewide priorities into a coherent long-term spatial vision for Greater Sydney, particularly in areas of growth and intensification.

The Institute recommends that the Plan:

- Strengthen expectations for architectural quality at the precinct and corridor scale, particularly in growth areas and transport-oriented development.
- Clearly position design excellence as integral to achieving housing supply, density and liveability outcomes simultaneously.
- Strengthen links between strategic planning and delivery mechanisms, including design review processes, procurement models and development pathways.
- Ensure strategic planning supports protection and adaptive reuse of built heritage as part of sustainable urban growth.

Statewide Policy for Industrial Lands

The Institute acknowledges that the *Statewide Policy for Industrial Lands* provides an important foundation for productivity and employment through zoning, classification and protection of industrial land.

However, industrial and employment precincts are also workplaces and part of the broader urban fabric. Their long-term performance depends on design-led, place-based considerations that support adaptability, worker amenity, environmental performance and integration with surrounding communities.

As industrial areas evolve, including transitions to higher-value employment or mixed-use precincts, clear design and planning frameworks will be critical to maintaining employment outcomes while improving resilience and place quality.

The Institute recommends that the final policy:

- Recognise the role of architect-led design in supporting modern, high-performance industrial and employment precincts.
- Encourage flexibility and appropriate mixed-use outcomes where contextually appropriate.
- Align productivity objectives with environmental performance, worker amenity and urban integration.

Implementation and System Alignment

Strategic planning reforms should be implemented in a way that supports clarity, consistency and coordinated delivery across the broader system.

The Institute recommends that the Government:

- Clearly articulate how strategic priorities translate into statutory planning controls and development assessment processes.
- Ensure alignment with related planning and building reforms to avoid duplication or unintended system complexity.
- Provide transparent implementation pathways demonstrating how strategic objectives will be realised in practice.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The Institute supports the NSW Government's ambition to reform strategic planning and welcomes the opportunity to contribute architectural expertise to achieving long-term public value.

As statutory planning pathways are streamlined, strong strategic intent, clear design expectations and transparent priorities are essential safeguards to ensure speed and certainty do not come at the expense of quality, community confidence or long-term value.

The Institute recommends the final strategic frameworks:

1. Explicitly recognise the role of design quality and architectural expertise in delivering strategic outcomes.
2. Strengthen the connection between the seven statewide priorities and design-led implementation.
3. Ensure regional and land-use plans translate strategic intent into clear expectations for quality, performance and place outcomes.



4. Support protection and adaptive reuse of built heritage within sustainable growth strategies.
5. Position strategic planning as a foundation for coordinated statutory reform and nationally aligned objectives relating to liveability, sustainability and integrated urban outcomes.

The Institute looks forward to continued engagement as these reforms progress and welcomes further discussion on how architectural expertise can support their successful implementation across NSW.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Elizabeth Carpenter".

Elizabeth Carpenter
NSW Chapter President

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Tammy Dickson".

Tammy Dickson
Executive Leader, NSW