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EXCLUSIVE New development rules may replace Council plans

CRACKING THE CODE

RENATO CASTELLO
URBAN DEVELOPMENT

COUNCIL development plans would be scrapped and replaced with a single planning and design “rule book” under a proposed reform of South Australia’s planning rules.

The State Planning Commission has released a blueprint for a new planning and design code, the cornerstone of which would be the consolidation of the “complex and sometimes inconsistent planning rules” of the 72 council development plans into a single reference point.

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Development code may replace plans

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The proposed code would enable “improved consistency” and provide certainty in the planning system, a discussion paper released for public consultation says.

“The Code will be a central feature of South Australia’s new planning system, becoming the state’s single planning rule book for assessing all development applications,” the discussion paper says.

“The Code will streamline zones and policy to drive a faster and more efficient development assessment process.

“As South Australia continues to grow, it is critical to ensure that our cities, regions and communities develop in ways that best adapt to, support, and further this growth.

“This can be achieved by providing certainty and removing unnecessary delays in

South Australia’s planning system.”

Councils will not be removed from the decision making process but a new ePlanning portal will determine which planning rules apply to a development application in a move the Commission says will save time and streamline approval processes.

At present applications are lodged with councils and assessed against different policies within each councils’ development plans, which could vary significantly among councils.

The Planning and Design Code is a result of a planning reform initiated by the former Labor Government. But new Planning Minister Stephan Knoll supported the intent of the proposed code which he said would help to reduce “red-

tape”.

“What we are doing with this code is replace a very patchwork system with some very clear statewide directions,” he said.

He said it is expected the code would reduce the number of planning zones, such as residential and industrial zones, from more than 1500 at present to about 70. The new code would also be aligned with state strategic priorities including job creation, climate change, transport and would have a focus on “good design”.

Local Government Association of SA executive director public affairs, Lisa Teburea, said the LGA has advocated for “sensible local variations” in planning policy.

“We hope an agreement can be reached to provide communities and councils with a genuine opportunity to influence the type of development that can occur in their

area,” she said. Urban Development Institute of Australia SA branch chief executive Pat Gerace said industry needs a system that is “efficient and leads to more jobs and economic growth”.

“Our members will be watching the process closely and hope the code reflects the sector’s feedback,” he said.

SA Greens MLC Mark Parnell said he was concerned the current planning system had removed the rights of people to have a say about development in their neighbourhood.

“The new planning system is fundamentally flawed in one major respect, that the system depends on people having input at a very early stage, when zoning laws are being re-

written but don’t have any say once the bulldozers are coming in,” he said.

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