

Issues and Conclusions

Traffic Impacts

- 3.1 In a report appended to the DHA's main written submission, traffic consultants Masson, Wilson, Twiney describe Bruncker Road as a sub-arterial road, with a single traffic lane in each direction; and with parallel parking and a bicycle lane on both sides¹. The traffic consultants observed that existing intersections on Bruncker Road offer a good level of service overall, with "acceptable delays" experienced at the Bruncker Road – Rifle Street intersection during the morning peak period. Based on their analysis, they identified two possible options for traffic access to the proposed housing development from Bruncker Road:
- opposite Rifle Street, or
 - further north near the crest of the hill.
- 3.2 Based on this advice, the DHA intends to construct two entrances to the development site from Bruncker Road: a roundabout at the intersection of Bruncker Road and Rifle Street and a left-turn-only intersection further north on Bruncker Road.
- 3.3 The submissions presented by the Adamstown Community Forum and the Adamstown Residents Action Group both raised concerns relating to potential traffic problems that may arise as a result of the

1 Submission No. 1, Appended Item A, p.2

proposed development. These concerns included traffic delays, traffic volume, pedestrian access, loss of parking spaces and the nature of the proposed roundabout².

- 3.4 In both written and oral evidence supplied to the Committee, the Adamstown Residents Action Group argued that disruptions to traffic flow on Bruncker Road could be minimised if access to the site were to be made via Military Road³, which currently has a single exit point onto Bruncker Road.
- 3.5 When questioned about this matter at the public hearing, the DHA responded that Military Road is a private road owned by the Department of Defence and could not therefore be used for public access to the development site. At the Committee's suggestion, however, DHA undertook to discuss such an arrangement with Defence.
- 3.6 In supplementary information supplied to the Committee following the public hearing, the DHA stated that they had discussed the matter with Defence who confirmed that the use of Military Road either for access to or egress from the development would not be permitted⁴.
- 3.7 Whilst DHA did not convey Defence's reasons for this refusal, the Committee heard evidence from traffic consultants at the public hearing to the effect that a third access point at the junction of Military and Bruncker roads would only serve to worsen the traffic conditions. According to the traffic consultant, access to the development should occur via

a controlled intersection either at Military Road or Rifle Street; I do not think you have both because they are too close together and you get interference between them⁵.

Retention of Mature Trees

- 3.8 The DHA's main submission and appended environmental reports demonstrate that no local threatened fauna or floral species will be adversely affected by the proposed development.
-

2 See Submission No.s 2 and 3

3 Submission No. 2, point 2 and Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 20

4 Defence Housing Authority, Letter responding to questions taken on notice, 19 March 2003, p. 3

5 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 47

- 3.9 The Adamstown Community Forum, however, noted in their submission that the site contains a number of mature trees and expressed concern that these will be removed when the site is cleared for development⁶. This concern was reiterated by representatives of both the Adamstown Community Forum and the Adamstown Residents Action Group who appeared at the public hearing⁷.
- 3.10 Committee members questioned DHA about the retention of mature trees. The DHA responded that it was their policy
- ...to maintain as many trees as possible on site
- and stated further that:
- Of all the healthy trees that are there, probably about half of them will be kept⁸.
- 3.11 The DHA later confirmed in writing that of the 84 mature trees existing on the site, 40 healthy trees will be retained and over 100 new trees will be planted⁹.

Soil Contamination Testing

- 3.12 The DHA main submission states that a soil contamination survey undertaken by Coffey Geosciences Ltd found
- ...no evidence of past potentially contaminating activity on the site other than limited importation of fill, use of the site as a rifle range, and general workshop activities¹⁰.
- 3.13 The Soil Contamination Report prepared by Coffey Geosciences and appended to the DHA's main submission stated that Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAHs) from oil, grease and ash products exceeded guideline values at three of a total of 35 sample locations¹¹.
- 3.14 The consultants believed that the PHA contamination was related to the presence of coal tar-based bitumen seal. They recommended that, whilst the site was generally suitable for habitation, validation should

6 Submission No. 3, point 1

7 See Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 25 & p.27

8 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 48

9 Defence Housing Authority, Letter responding to questions taken on notice, 19 March 2003, p. 4

10 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 5.1

11 Submission No. 1, Appended Item D, paragraph 5.4

be undertaken after removal of the bitumen to ensure that PHAs have not leached into underlying soils.

- 3.15 At the public hearing, the Committee questioned whether the DHA would be undertaking the recommended validation testing. The DHA responded that they had found a way of coring through the bitumen to conduct preliminary tests and that no hazardous accumulation had been found¹².
- 3.16 Supplementary written evidence supplied by the DHA to the Committee following the hearing provided results of the preliminary testing and confirmed that
- ...the recommended soil validation sampling and analysis will be undertaken during the course of demolition work¹³.

Community Consultation

- 3.17 In its main submission, the DHA states that it held two meetings with members of the public at which
- ...no substantive issues were raised¹⁴.
- 3.18 However, the Committee received submissions from two local community groups; namely the Adamstown Residents Action Group and the Adamstown Community Forum, both of which raised a number of unresolved issues regarding the potential impact of the proposed development.
- 3.19 Both community groups expressed considerable dissatisfaction with the consultation process itself. The Adamstown Residents Action Group stated that, whilst public meetings had been held with the DHA, residents were
- ...unanimous in their view that DHA and [*Newcastle City*] Council are ignoring the views of residents in the proposals developed to date¹⁵.

The Adamstown Community Forum likewise stated that residents felt DHA consultants

12 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 2

13 Defence Housing Authority, Letter responding to questions taken on notice, 19 March 2003, p. 4

14 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 19.3

15 Submission No. 2, point 1

...were obeying their statutory requirement to consult with the community without giving any consideration to the issues raised...¹⁶.

These views were reiterated in verbal evidence given at the public hearing¹⁷.

3.20 Several of the issues raised by the community groups were addressed in the consultants' reports provided to the Committee as appendices to the main submission. However, the Adamstown Community Forum stated that the Traffic Assessment and Flora and Fauna Assessment were not available for perusal at the public meetings held in September-October 2002¹⁸.

3.21 At the public hearing, the DHA acknowledged the need to resolve outstanding areas of community concern and undertook to

...make available the experts' reports that residents and community groups have asked for¹⁹.

3.22 At the conclusion of the public hearing, the Chair made a statement emphasising that the Committee

...takes very seriously the importance of public consultation, and expressed the hope that communication between the DHA and the local community groups would improve in the future²⁰.

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the Defence Housing Authority in future ensure that there is adequate direct community consultation.

Proposed Open Space

3.23 In its main submission, the DHA describes a landscaped open area planned for the south-east corner of the development, which will serve as a "buffer-zone" between the housing development and the adjacent Merewether Golf Course. The open space will include a

16 Submission No. 3, introductory remarks

17 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 29

18 Submission No. 3, introductory remarks

19 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 46

20 ib id, p. 50

filtration system that will redirect stormwater to the existing golf course dam²¹.

- 3.24 Other evidence submitted to the inquiry raised two related concerns regarding this proposed open space:
- it does not constitute ‘active’ or useable open space; and
 - it has the potential to be highly dangerous due to the incursion of mis-hit golf balls.

Recreational Space

- 3.25 The Adamstown Community Forum submitted that the DHA proposal failed to provide adequate recreational space for residents of the development. They stated further that other open areas in the neighbourhood were not suitable for year-round recreational use and provide little equipment for children²². Likewise, the Adamstown Residents Action Group argued that the usual requirement for active open space is around 10% of the total development²³.
- 3.26 At the public hearing, Committee members observed that the development as planned did appear quite dense, and suggested that the DHA may wish to consider the inclusion of
- ...a small area of open space that could be available for recreational purposes – children’s playground equipment and that sort of thing²⁴.
- 3.27 The DHA stated that, as local government would be responsible for the maintenance of any such park area, they would undertake to discuss the matter with the local council.
- 3.28 Supplementary evidence supplied to the Committee by DHA estimated that there may be between 110-115 children resident at the completed development, although information as to the ages of the children was not available²⁵.

21 Appendix C, Submission No. 1, paragraph 9.5

22 Submission No. 3, points 4-6

23 Submission No. 2, point 4

24 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 48

25 Defence Housing Authority, Letter responding to questions taken on notice, 19 March 2003, p. 3

3.29 This evidence also records that, subsequent to the public hearing, the DHA discussed the issue of recreational space with the Newcastle City Council. According to the DHA, the Council

...believes Adamstown has a sufficiency of 'active' open space for Council to administer, and has a distinct preference for 'passive' open space such is planned for the DHA development²⁶.

Protection from Mis-hit Golf Balls

3.30 Several submissions²⁷ pointed out the unsuitability of the proposed open space as a useable recreation area for residents, due to the danger posed by mis-hit golf balls.

3.31 In its submission, the Merewether Golf Club argued that the proposed open area is potentially dangerous and also expressed concern that no measures have been taken to prevent trespass on Golf Club land²⁸.

3.32 In verbal evidence given before the Committee, the representative of the Merewether Golf Club enlarged upon the Club's concerns relating to silting of the Club's water storage ponds that may occur during development of the DHA site²⁹.

3.33 As a solution, the Golf Club proposed that the land identified as open space be transferred to them. The Golf Club stated that they would fence and maintain the area, whilst ensuring that relevant authorities have access to the stormwater filtration system³⁰.

3.34 When questioned about a solution to the potential run-off and silting problems, the DHA stated that silt traps would be established on site as part of the standard construction process. The DHA also stated that they would consult with the Merewether Golf Club and the Newcastle City Council to resolve the issue of errant golf balls³¹.

3.35 In written evidence forwarded to the Committee following the public hearing, the DHA advised the outcome of discussions with the Newcastle City Council and the Merewether Golf Club relating to these unresolved issues.

26 *ib id*, p. 4

27 See Submission Nos. 2, 3 & 5

28 Submission No. 5

29 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 40

30 Submission No. 5

31 Appendix D, Official Transcript of Evidence, p. 46

- 3.36 The DHA advised that, as part of the Development Control Plan process, the Council had invited the Merewether Golf Club to submit a proposal relating to the lease or transfer of the proposed open space.
- 3.37 Following discussions with the Golf Club, the DHA stated that they have agreed to install a gross pollutant trap to filter water flowing onto the Club grounds.
- 3.38 Further, should the Golf Club be unsuccessful in its application to take over the proposed open space, the DHA will provide financial assistance to help the Club install an appropriate barrier to provide protection from wayward golf balls³².

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the Defence Housing Authority continue to work closely with the Merewether Golf Club and the Newcastle City Council to ensure appropriate measures are taken to guarantee public safety.

Project Timing and Contingency Planning

- 3.39 At the public hearing, Committee members questioned the contingency plans to be implemented by the DHA in the event of a delay in the proposed project timelines.
- 3.40 The Committee was informed that the Development Control Plan for the project was to go on display for public comment from 10 March to 7 April 2003. Whilst the plan must be exhibited for a minimum of 28 days, Committee members were concerned to note that there is no statutory time frame in which the Newcastle City Council is obliged to make a determination on the plan.
- 3.41 In view of this, the DHA was asked to supply the Committee with a timetable setting out critical project milestones. The DHA anticipates that the Development Control Plan will be approved at the end of April, with a view to completing construction of the first 35 dwellings by June 2004 and the remainder by October 2004³³. However, these

32 Defence Housing Authority, Letter responding to questions taken on notice, 19 March 2003, p. 3

33 ib id, p. 2

dates are reliant upon the expeditious approval by Council of the Development Control Plan.

- 3.42 Having received this supplementary evidence, the Committee remains concerned that uncertainty surrounding critical project dates may impact upon overall costs. This is of particular concern in view of the fact that the project budget contains a very small contingency allowance and makes no provision for escalation.

Project Costs and Feasibility

- 3.43 During in-camera deliberations regarding the feasibility study presented by the DHA in relation to the proposed Adamstown development, the Committee was concerned to note uncertainty surrounding particular budget elements, while other important elements were omitted altogether.
- 3.44 The indefinite costs and omissions noted in the feasibility study, coupled with the uncertainties surrounding the timing of the project prompted members to request the provision of a complete and updated feasibility study showing, among other things, contingency and escalation allowances and expected percentage return.

Recommendation 3

The Committee was concerned that the Defence Housing Authority had not provided a comprehensive feasibility study. The Committee requests that in future it be provided in advance of the hearing with a full feasibility and contingency study including contingency provisions for time and cost delays.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the proposed development of off-base housing for Defence at Adamstown, NSW, proceed at the estimated cost of \$21.6 million.

Hon Judi Moylan MP
Chair
14 May 2003