

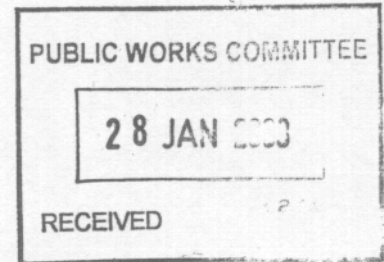
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27 January, 2003



Attention: Margaret Swieringa

Re: Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works

Development of Off-Base Housing For Defence at Adamstown, Newcastle, NSW

The following comment is submitted in response to:

'If the estimated cost of the work can be justified'

The personnel to be housed in the completed project will be based at Williamtown.

Adamstown is 30 kms from Williamtown. This means that the tenants would be required to spend travelling 45 - 60 minutes both to and from work each day. As a government that is allegedly committed to reducing the emission of greenhouse gases, it does not make sense to have defence personnel travelling large distances in motor vehicles, the major cause of pollution and greenhouse gas emission in Newcastle. There is no adequate public transport between Adamstown and Williamtown.

Land at Adamstown has increased significantly in value over the past few years. Recently, small building blocks have sold for more than \$200,000. Darcy Real Estate recently sold a vacant lot in Lockyer Street for \$295,000. Lots in a subdivision of this site would fetch a higher price because of the elevation and outlook of the land. They could realise as much as \$500,000 each.

I believe that it would be economically more viable for the parcel of land on Brunker Road to be subdivided into large lots and sold on the open market..

The proceeds from this sale could then be used to purchase existing housing in areas closer to Williamtown, i.e., Medowie, Williamtown, Raymond Terrace, Fern Bay, Stockton, Mayfield, Mayfield West, Woodberry and Beresfield.

Should the Defence Housing Authority intend to proceed with the current plan to redevelop the land, then the following is submitted.

There is a major error in the submission by the Defence Housing Authority. Para 19.3 relates to the two community meetings and states 'No substantive issues were raised'.

This is blatantly untrue. I chaired the first meeting which was incredibly cordial given the concerns of the Adamstown residents. Many issues were raised which I will detail later. We were assured that the issues raised by us would be considered.

When the second meeting was called, I asked not to chair it, because I wanted to be able to participate in the discussion. The meeting was chaired by an officer of Newcastle City Council.

Many residents at this meeting became very angry for many reasons:

- 1 The traffic study which we had been assured was completed was not available for our perusal.
- 2 Likewise the Flora and Fauna study was not available for residents to see.
- 3 Problems we had raised on 16 September were dismissed. We were simply told they were not problems, without any explanation given.
- 4 At both meetings copious notes were taken by both representatives from DHA and the consultants. Yet at the second meeting, not one change had been made to the draft plan. Nor has any change been made since the second meeting.
- 5 At the meeting on 16 September, the Lord Mayor of Newcastle, Mr. John Tate, was present. He raised many issues, the most important of which was the inappropriate placement of the open space. Even this issue was not addressed. The residents believed, rightly as it has turned out, that if DHA and their consultants ignored the concerns of our Lord Mayor, it was unlikely that the concerns of the residents of Adamstown would receive even the slightest consideration.
- 6 I personally felt that my commitment to my local community was being abused. I, and many others, were of the opinion that the DHA and their consultants were obeying their statutory requirement to consult with the community without giving any consideration to the issues raised by the residents who attended the meeting.

Historical Background

Until the 1930's, each Newcastle Suburb had its own local Council. Adamstown was one of these. The early residents of Adamstown provided the workforce for the coal pits at Merewether. This was close enough for the men to ride their bicycles to work. Local shops, schools churches and other amenities sprang up; thus building a strong sense of an Adamstown Community.

Despite its incorporation into Newcastle City Council, Adamstown has retained this strong sense of community. Many residents have lived their whole lives here. Those of us who have moved here in the past 20 years (and I am one of them) also highly value this sense of community and the aspects of it that make Adamstown one of the best places in which to live: low crime rate, good neighbours, friendliness, etc.

In recent years Adamstown has undergone a process of 'gentrification' and continues to do so. Some older houses have been demolished and rebuild. Others have been

renovated and substantially extended. Large lots have had additional dwellings constructed. Generally the quality of the housing stock has improved dramatically in the past fifteen years. It is reasonable for it to continue to do so.

Adamstown residents are committed to doing everything in their power to maintain the excellent quality of life that we are fortunate enough to enjoy. The proposal to rezone the subject land was vigorously resisted by most residents: public inspections and meetings were well attended. A public voice meeting was addressed by representatives of the Merewether Golf Club, Adamstown Community Forum and Adamstown Residents Action Group. These three organisations were committed and worked co-operatively to oppose the redevelopment.

History records that the Councillors did not heed our objections. Since the land has been rezoned it is now our goal to obtain its best possible use for residential development.

Our concerns with the current plan are:

Traffic:

- 1 The study presented to Newcastle City Council shows that already during morning peak hour, the traffic backs up to beyond Rifle Street, the site of the proposed roundabout.
- 2 To state in para 12.2 that Bruncker Road 'is presently operating within its capacity' is a nonsense. It may well be for 20 hours of the day, but during the peak hours when most motorists use it, it is operating well above its capacity. Local residents and motorists have been complaining for years about the delays at the traffic lights at the intersection of Bruncker and Glebe Roads, where traffic in Bruncker Road, during the morning peak times, is backed up to beyond Rifle Street.
- 3 Military Road joins Bruncker Road in closer proximity to the proposed roundabout. The residents believe it is too close to be safe. Should the proposal proceed, we believe that the only access should be via Military Road at an intersection controlled by traffic lights.
- 4 Some residents are concerned about the actual construction of the roundabout. They believe that a satisfactory roundabout cannot be built without the resumption of land from houses on the Western side of Bruncker Road.
- 5 Other residents raised the issue of the roundabout creating an alternative route for motorists travelling to Kotara and Garden City Shopping Centre. These vehicles would turn left into Rifle Street, left into Date Street, and right into Fletcher Street and then proceed to Kotara or Garden City. These streets are designed for local traffic only and are already overtaxed by the traffic travelling to the William Street and Garden Grove Parade Industrial Area. This will be further aggravated by the proposed redevelopment of the former Humes site for residential buildings. Each

additional building, be it a house, shop, office or factory, increases the level of traffic. Each proposal claims that its effect is negligible, but the cumulative total effect is significant for the residents who live in these streets.

- 6 A development that involves 72 residential units with a minimum of three bedrooms must have a significant effect on the number of traffic movements in Brunner Road and other local roads.
- 7 It appears that the proponents have not investigated other possible access routes to the site from either the east or north of the site.

Open Space

- 1 Adamstown, compared with many other suburbs, gives the appearance of being well provided with open space. However, one needs to look at the nature and use of this space.
- 2 Adamstown Park is a large area given over almost entirely to organised competitive sport: tennis, bowls, soccer, cycling, cricket.
- 3 Connell Park is the area identified in this proposal as providing open space for the residents of the development. In the centre of this park is a major electricity sub-station. Parts of the park are poorly drained and remain unusable for long periods of time after heavy rain. There is very little play equipment provided at this park. Much has been removed in recent years to minimise the risk of insurance claims against the Council.
- 4 We believe that a development of this magnitude should provide for the open space needs of the residents. A minimum would be a safe enclosed area, away from traffic in which children could take part in spontaneous play and also use equipment provided.
- 5 The area allocated for open space is adjacent to the golf course where it is expected that wayward balls would regularly land. We were advised that this space was not intended to be used as a play area (for obvious reasons).
- 6 Currently the golf course is unable to prevent children and young people from trespassing on its land. What provision has been made in the plan to protect both the children and the golf club's assets.

Density:

Although the density of the proposal is within the permitted limits allowed, we believe that the proposal should far exceed the limits. As earlier stated, Adamstown is experiencing a period of 'gentrification'. It is therefore reasonable to expect all new developments to exceed the current average for all standards of redevelopment.

Flora and Fauna

- 1 At both community consultation meetings, the residents were advised that there were no significant trees on the site. There are mature trees on the site, and every mature tree is significant. It makes no sense to remove an adult tree and then plant immature trees to replace it. There was no indication of an intention to retain mature trees. The residents believe that every mature tree should be retained.
- 2 Para 5.5 records the presence of two threatened species of fauna: the Grey-Headed Flying-Fox and the Large Bentwing-Bat. The fact that the habitat is small makes it even more important to these species, especially at times of prolonged drought such as that being experienced currently. Obviously any development will adversely impact on the local population of these species. Again this leads to the expectation that every mature tree will be retained.
- 3 One neighbour in Richard Street has expressed concern to me about the apparent presence of a termite colony on the site.

Should you need any further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully

Joan Lambert
Chairperson

Adamstown Community Forum