

OBJECTION TO PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT SSD-65595459

Lack of Community Consultation

There was grossly inadequate community consultation and lack of transparency from the outset of the proposal to use Wallarah 1,2 and Blackley Ovals for the site of a new basketball stadium referred to as Hunter Indoor Sports Centre (HISC).

From the outset, the decision to propose this site was shrouded in secrecy and a 'decide and defend' mentality applied. Meetings relating to the proposed site are clearly documented in City of Newcastle Council diaries and yet no robust community consultation process was carried out.

I became aware of this when I attended a community rally on Saturday 10/08/24 and many residents spoke about not being consulted, and this has continued to be the theme in further discussions with surrounding residents.

<https://www.newcastleherald.com.au/video/local/x93t46w/new-lambton-rally-at-wallarah-and-blackley-ovals-opposes-new-basketball-stadium-newcastle-herald-august-10-2024/>

Exploration of Alternative Sites and Funding

The Broadmeadow Place draft plan proposes, within its Hunter Park, another swimming pool facility which is unnecessary since there is already a sizeable facility nearby at Lambton. The proposed HISC should therefore be accommodated within this Broadmeadow Place, where the Newcastle Basketball Stadium is currently situated, and draft plans amended accordingly.

The current Newcastle Council Works Depot, Broadmeadow, has not yet been explored as an alternative and could be relocated to the former Astra Street Landfill site in Shortland.

Whilst the community appreciate the state government will not fund the purchase of any land, options could be explored to raise funds for a deposit to purchase a suitable site, and a business case for subsequent funds, from activities such as spectator games and paid parking, could be used to service a loan for an alternative site.

There are also potentially several site options in the Mayfield Industrial area off Industrial Drive.



Funding

It is understood that a state significant development is one which exceeds \$30, 000, 000. The currently available funding falls significantly short of this already to complete Stage 1, and the funding for the entire proposal is currently not available, nor is there any statement on where that funding is proposed to come from.

I do not support any proposal on any location which does not have a plan for funding, nor one that may expect or force ratepayers to foot the bill.

My genuine concern is that the estimated development cost, currently costed at over \$90, 000, 000 including GST (Aplas Quantity Surveyors document), will change significantly over time. Without secure funding, this may just be a 'white elephant' development proposal.

Flooding

The area is prone to extreme flooding events. The Pasha Bulka storm in 2007 saw extreme flooding on the ovals where the proposed stadium is to be built and in the surrounding streets.

A local resident who lived in a unit adjacent to the proposed site posted on Facebook yesterday (10/11/24):

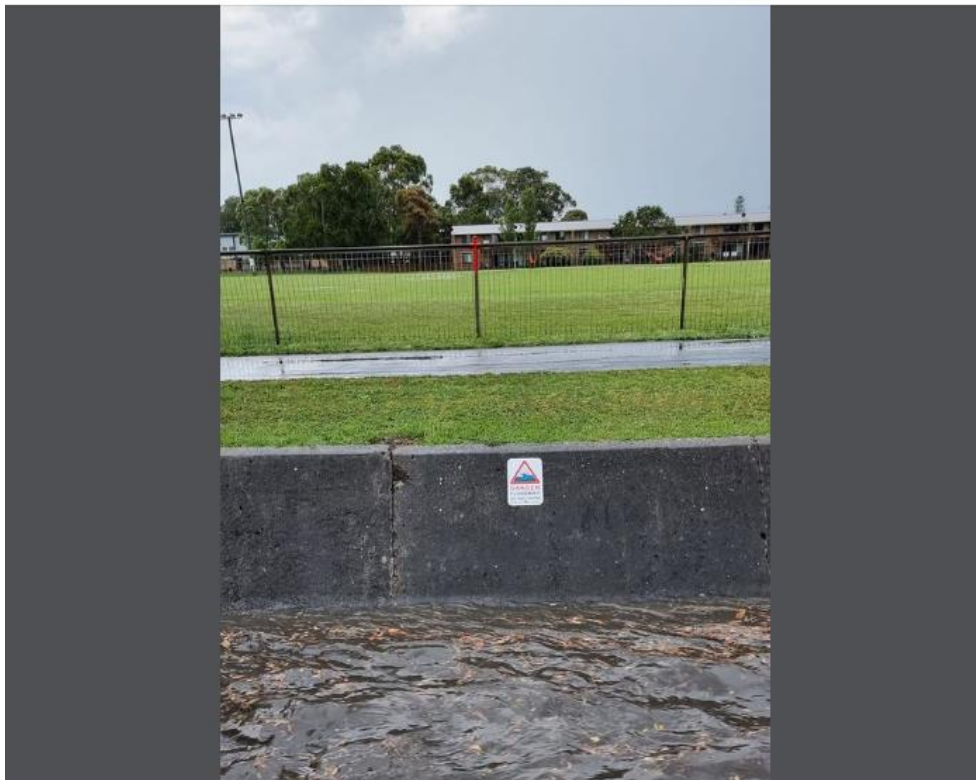
In the flood in 2007 I live the units and I had my four week car in the garage and the flood went up to halve up the back seat I had the replaced due to the flood

1d Like Reply

And another local resident posted 4 days ago (7/11/24):

4 days ago · 🌐

5 minutes of solid rain and this is what the drain looks like.



The National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility (NCCARF) Case studies of extreme events East Coast Lows and the Newcastle/Central Coast Pasha Bulker Storm reported on this event and its impacts in 2010 and stated this is not an “unprecedented event” (Verdon-Kidd et al., 2010, p. Preface). https://knowledge.aidr.org.au/media/1925/verdon-kidd_2010_east_coast_lows_pasha_bulker_storm.pdf

The following excerpts from this document (in italics) highlight flooding issues in Newcastle and at this proposed site:

6.2.1 Newcastle City Council

The Pasha Bulker storm and resulting flooding came as a ‘surprise’ to most of the community, many of whom did not even realize that they lived within a floodplain. Flooding of a similar magnitude occurred in the early 1900s [BMT WBM, 2009], but there was little, if any, awareness of this historical occurrence within the community.

Council has also since initiated a flash flood warning system for Newcastle.

From a community perspective, the flood heightened awareness of the vulnerability of Newcastle to flood risks. Subsequent storms that served as a “reminder” occurred on 9 December 2007 and again on 28 February 2008 (both involving 30 mm of rainfall within a 30 minute period) (Verdon-Kidd et al., 2010, (p.36).

First-hand experience in emergency flood management in Newcastle gained during the 2007 storms has highlighted areas of specific concern that need to be addressed as part of future flood planning. Some of these are not new issues but are ongoing problems faced during such events and therefore are important to highlight for emergency managers. These include:

- ***Rescue and management efforts are quickly hampered when roads become inundated, leading to stranded vehicles and heavy traffic.***
- *Vehicles (mostly four-wheel drives) travelling through floodwaters created sizable wake (bow waves) up to 0.5 m high. These waves can propagate into private properties and exacerbated flood damage (in some instances, resulting in above floor inundation that otherwise would not have been affected).*
(Verdon-Kidd et al., 2010, p.37).

There were two main impacts in Newcastle

*(1) the urban flash flooding driven by localised, high intensity bursts of rainfall, and (2) the Hunter flooding driven by the inland penetration of the rainfall over several days. **The impacts of urban flash flooding were focussed in flat areas with steep headwaters where drains were unable to convey away, either due to insufficient capacity or blockage, sufficient water.** In steep areas there was also damage, but it was localised and typically due to overflows of the street drainage system (Verdon-Kidd et al., 2010, pp. 45-46).*

The Newcastle City-wide Floodplain Risk Management Study and Plan, Final Report June 2012 (Haines et al., 2012) recognises that flash flooding is a problem with Lambton being specifically mentioned.

Essentially, the proposed site is known to be flood prone, and while flood mitigation has been included in the proposal for the development, it has largely ignored the impact of the development on flooding for surrounding residents and streets.

The ovals also act as a sponge to some degree to absorb water during heavy rain events. Without this protection, and with the addition of expansive hard surfaces, local residential streets will be put at higher risk in extreme weather events which are known to be increasing in frequency, as is widely accepted by the scientific community.

Traffic and safety risks

Traffic chaos is already a problem in the surrounding roads and residential streets when the McDonald Jones Stadium is used for NRL football games and other large events. This the additional traffic generated by this proposal will unreasonably impact residents in adjacent units and homes and surrounding streets. It also impacts the greater community who use the surrounding roads. Other road widening options/strategies cannot be implemented due to the existing storm water drains which are currently inadequate.

Emergency services, such as fire trucks and ambulances, cannot access existing houses in residential streets adjoining the ovals in emergencies. During the community rally on Saturday 10/08/24, a local resident described a situation where an ambulance couldn't access a home due to cars parked in the street while an event was occurring at the McDonald Jones Stadium. She stated the resident had to be wheeled a few hundred metres on a stretcher to be put into an ambulance.

The Newcastle City-wide Floodplain Risk Management Study and Plan, Final Report June 2012 (Haines et al., 2012) raises concern that: "Flash flooding is a particular issue for Newcastle, as severe flooding problems can occur with very little warning. In most cases, emergency services and combat agencies such as the Police and SES would not have the time to help people in need during a flash flood." (Haines et al., 2012, p. IV). The proposed HISC poses safety risks which would be exacerbated in an extreme weather event, especially flash flooding, where traffic congestion would seriously hinder residents' ability to evacuate quickly.

Overdevelopment

The proposal hasn't accounted for future population growth. Compounding effects of this proposed development, plus the proposed Broadmeadow Place development, will lead to a significant increase in population, increased in local road use, increased need for school and other infrastructure to cope. Lambton High School will need to expand to cater for such growth and without access to the current greenspace of the ovals, this is unacceptable.

The cumulative impacts of impending future projects, including Broadmeadow Place and Hunter Park, were omitted in the EIS.

The greenspace of the ovals will be more valuable than ever to cater for the needs of this planned population increase.

Poor planning/Social and Environmental Impacts for Local Residents

This substantial piece of greenspace is currently used by Lambton High School students on weekdays for leisure and for emergency drills. It is also used by multiple other sports (such as soccer and cricket), and by community members for leisure.

Displacing students and multiple sports, and even proposing that some sports will be expected to use Tarro and Beresfield facilities is outrageous and will likely lead to declining participation. This is not a trade-off I am willing to accept.

Research reveals that green space has positive impacts on mental health (Barton & Rogerson, 2017). Lost greenspace will therefore have negative mental health impacts on current users and surrounding residents.

Noise and lighting for outdoor areas will have unacceptable impacts on surrounding neighbours and this has not been assessed.

This loss will be compounded by the rise in population as a result of the Broadmeadow Place.

Community Access removed

The current ovals are available for all community members to access and use. The proposed development does not maintain that heritage and it is therefore unacceptable that a highly utilised greenspace and community asset be removed, leaving a very limited area for public use.

Support Stadium on Another Site

I want to be clear that I fully support a new basketball stadium but not on this site and providing that funding is available to complete the project.

REFERENCES

Barton, J. & Rogerson, M. (2017) *The importance of greenspace for mental health*. BJPsych Int. Nov 1;14(4):79-81. doi: 10.1192/s2056474000002051.

Gissing et al. (2007) cited in Verdon-Kidd, D., Kiem, A.S., Willgoose, G. & Haines, P. (2010) *Case studies of extreme events. East Coast Lows and the Newcastle/Central Coast Pasha Bulker Storm*. National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility, Gold Coast.

Haines, Dr P., Gibbins, D. & Hardwick, R. (2012). *The Newcastle City-wide Floodplain Risk Management Study and Plan. Final Report June 2012*. BMT WBM Pty Ltd.

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