

## **Opposition to Hunter Indoor Sports Centre (HISC) development**

### **Object to the project**

I strongly object to the proposed Development Application for a Hunter Indoor Sports Centre at 2 Monash Road and 24 Wallarah Road, New Lambton. The development would remove a significant recreational green space provided by Blackley and Wallarah Ovals which are heavily used for recreation and as playing fields for football and cricket. Lambton High school, with approximately 1200 students, uses these ovals every day for sport and during break times, as well as for events and emergency evacuation procedures. This is not a suitable site for the HISC development. It would have ongoing detrimental, permanent impacts on residents and students in the local area and should not be approved.

The recently announced sporting fields for Maryland highlights that there are more appropriate site options available for the Hunter Indoor Sports Centre other than trying to squeeze it onto Blackley/Wallarah Ovals. This stadium is to be known as a HUNTER facility and should be easily accessible to the wider (and expanding) Hunter community; it is not just a Newcastle basketball stadium. Other possible sites such as the Hunter Park sporting precinct, provide basketball players and supporters with a new stadium but not at the expense of other sporting codes, schools or the local community's access to precious green spaces.

Specific concerns are outlined below.

### **Environmental and Community Impact**

This development would remove a significant recreational green space provided by Blackley and Wallarah Ovals which are heavily used for recreation and as playing fields for football and cricket. Green spaces are precious and irreplaceable, particularly in urban areas. This maintenance of the ovals as green spaces is vital to

- retain freely accessible recreational areas available to community members 24/7
- retain children's sporting fields and existing local community sporting facilities
- maintain local outdoor community sporting and recreation culture and participation
- continue to improve liveability and well-being of our local, growing community, providing the social and health benefits
- mitigate urban heat effects
- accommodate the essential need for green space to complement the increased population growth as part of the Broadmeadow Place Strategy
- encourage engagement and inclusion of families and the elderly with their local community within peaceful, green spaces

- enhance long-term savings for the NSW healthcare system through increased participation in outdoor recreational activities
- show a commitment to our future generations, the value and importance of protecting Newcastle's green spaces

The proposed provision of a grassed drainage swale on the eastern side of the site close to Turton Road, divided by the access road, as sufficient green space is unacceptable.

The proposal does not meet DPHI guidelines of being in the interests of the public as the benefits of the basketball community do not outweigh the permanent, significant impacts on the surrounding local community.

### **Direct Negative Impacts on Lambton High School**

- Lambton High school, with approximately 1200 students, will no longer have Blackley/Wallarah Ovals available for every day for sport and during break times, as well as for events and emergency evacuation procedures.
- Alternative ovals such as Harker (locked), Ford or Kentish Ovals are further away from the school and access:
  - requires that students cross a busy road, raising safety concerns,
  - increases movement/transition time between classes, reducing lesson/learning time and
  - increases demands on teacher supervision and organisation.
- The extent of student access to the proposed new facility is unclear and cannot adequately replace freely available outdoor space. The HISC DA indicates that the BANL would develop partnerships with Lambton High School and the wider community to facilitate patronage of the facility by school groups. This suggests that access to the facilities would be at significant cost to both local schools and the local community.
- Increased flooding in the Covered Outdoor Learning Area has been acknowledged in the HISC Flood Impact and Risk Assessment p37. This is unsatisfactory and raises further student/teacher safety concerns.  
*'Within the outdoor covered area in the south-west corner of Lambton High School the baseline velocities of 0.1-0.2 m/s are increased to 0.3-0.7 m/s.'*
- Construction noise and vibration will directly impact teaching and learning over many months with proposed construction to take place 7am-6pm Monday to Friday, 8am-1pm Saturday, including all machine work.
- Visual impact of the building complex in close proximity to the school and playground areas including:
  - an increased building height and shading effects
  - westward shift brings it closer to Lambton High School

- removal of natural evacuation zone and
- increased hard surface areas and potential urban heat island effects.

These are detrimental changes to the current green space outlook enjoyed by Lambton High students/teachers, potentially impacting emotional and mental wellbeing.

### **Traffic Congestion and Pedestrian Safety**

- Basketball stadium use is anticipated between 4pm-9pm Monday to Friday, with up to 500 visitors/hour. This coincides with peak commuter traffic and congestion periods on Turton and Lambton Roads and will further raise traffic safety concerns.
- Existing traffic chaos causes real issues for those trying to get into the hockey centre, stopping for the pedestrian lights, then having to push their way across the driveway entry amid an endless stream of stadium patrons. Entry/exist of vehicles and pedestrians to/from the proposed HISC will further exacerbate this problem.
- There are already major safety concerns with traffic congestion, limited parking and movement of pedestrians along Lambton Road and Turton Road during major events, including sporting events at McDonald Jones stadium. People are forced to park in the surrounding residential areas and then cross busy roads including Turton and Lambton Roads, not always crossing at designated crossings. Major safety issues also arise with pedestrians trying to access tour buses/coaches parked on side streets near Lambton High School during major events at McDonald Jones stadium.
- This proposal will also generate more pedestrian movement towards Turton Road to connect to public buses. Further traffic and pedestrian loads on these roads will increase the risk of crashes and death.
- All traffic access to site will be arriving and leaving from the south on Turton Road and depart to the north due to the left in, left out access. This will place further congestion on the main roads as well as increase traffic in narrow streets in the neighbouring residential areas. The modelling provided on Young and Monash Roads has not included major events and is not representative of traffic flow on adjoining residential roads.
- Traffic overflow measures, in the report, for events of up to 1700 people recommend parking in adjacent streets. These are largely residential areas, often with narrow roads/laneways. There are already issues with vehicles stopping or parking across driveways, unsafely dropping off/picking up passengers and side streets being reduced to single lanes with cars parking on both sides of the road.

- HISC Flood Impact and Risk Assessment p37 clearly indicates that localised velocity increases within Turton Road will increase *‘from a baseline of 0.7-1.8 m/s up to 1.1-2.2 m/s’*. As rain events increase in intensity and frequency, there will be greater pressure on existing infrastructure and aging stormwater drainage and soil/slope stability, with increased run-off and reduced infiltration. Turton Road already floods regularly during heavy rain and much of the water in surrounding residential areas remains for many days after. Turton Road has been closed in both directions between Griffiths and Lambton Roads during flood events. This proposed development will exacerbate flooding, traffic disruptions and property damage that occur during regular rain events.
- The increased traffic congestion and restricted movement of traffic around the proposed development will impact on access for emergency vehicles.

## **Strategic Contexts**

The proposed HISC development on Blackley and Wallarah Ovals is highly inconsistent with State, district and local environmental strategic plans and policies as described below.

- **Newcastle Environment Strategy 2023**

The Newcastle Environment Strategy 2023 clearly prioritises Nature-Based Solutions as an integral part of the CSP. This Community Strategic Plan, towards 2040, aims to ‘Strengthen our natural environments ... to support healthy, biodiverse systems ... and maintain recreational amenity as well as ecological and community value’ including maximising urban greening. Any development of the New Lambton ovals completely contradicts these objectives.

- **Hunter Regional Plan 2041**

Objective 3 – Create 15-minute neighbourhoods to support mixed, multi-modal, inclusive and vibrant local communities.

Objective 6 – Conserve heritage, landscapes, environmentally sensitive areas, waterways and drinking catchments.

Objective 7 – Reach net zero and increase resilience and sustainable infrastructure.

This planning proposal does not comply with Objective 3 as it reduces local access of the neighbourhoods, local schools and sporting groups to the open green space provided by Blackley and Wallarah Ovals (performance outcome 3). Similarly, such a development would significantly reduce green spaces to support the regeneration of and connection to the natural environment (performance outcome 7).

Green infrastructure for 15-minute neighbourhood assets (p38 HRP 2041) include

- tree-lined streets, including road verges
- regional parks, urban parks, open space reserves, formal gardens and community gardens
- river and creek corridors, cycleways and safe routes along road, rail or light rail corridors
- ovals, school and other institutional playing fields, and other major parks and golf courses

Currently, Blackley and Wallarah Ovals and surrounds provide these assets as well as contribute to reducing urban heat island effects, as identified as a priority in the Newcastle Development Control Plan 2023 - DCP 2023, Section B6 Urban heat. These existing green spaces create more natural, sustainable ecosystems, cooler spaces, improved water absorption and air movement, and as a result, improved community health and wellbeing.

Transforming over 3ha of turfed, woody vegetated and gardened area to largely buildings and car parks does not conserve valuable green landscapes, contradicts Objective 6 and makes the achievement of net zero much more difficult (Objective 7). The inclusion of a large swale area along Turton Road is not reasonable compensation for the area of the ovals that would be lost.

- **Hunter Regional Plan 2036**

Goal 3 – Thriving Communities

Direction 17: Create healthy built environments through good design

Direction 18: Enhance access to recreational facilities and connect open spaces

Direction 17 identifies the importance of integrated recreational walking and cycling networks in enhancing the quality of neighbourhoods and community participation in physical activity. Similarly, Direction 18 highlights the importance of accessible outdoor spaces for community enjoyment and recreation opportunities.

The existing open green spaces of Blackley and Wallarah Ovals provide accessible recreation areas for the local community, schools and sporting groups and will meet an increasing need as future housing developments occur in the nearby Broadmeadow precinct. It is vital that these areas are retained.

- **Greater Newcastle Metropolitan Plan 2036**

Key outcomes of the GNMP 2036 are to:

- Enhance environment, amenity and resilience for quality of life

- Improve connections to jobs, services and recreation.

The vision of this plan highlights the importance of showcasing Newcastle as a lifestyle city with green suburban communities, easy access to open space and recreation networks and a high quality of life (Outcome 2: Enhance environment, amenity and resilience for quality of life). The GNMP 2036 recognises the importance of green spaces. 'Residents value Greater Newcastle's diversity of natural landscapes and enjoy lifestyles based on a range of social, recreation and sporting opportunities.' (Strategy 10 Create better buildings and great places, p32 GNMP 2036) Currently, this value is being provided in part by Blackley and Wallarah Ovals, being heavily used by the community, local schools and sporting groups.

A site for the proposed HSIC development should not be to the detriment of existing sporting facilities. Protecting these ovals from encroachment of development is also consistent with Newcastle City Council's commitment, as one of the Greater Newcastle councils, to 'improve access to open space, recreation areas and waterways so that 90% of houses are within a 10-minute walk of open space' (p 35, Action 12.1, Strategy 12 Enhance the Blue and Green Grid and the urban tree canopy, GNMP 2036).

- **Newcastle Local Strategic Planning Statement 2021**

The Local Strategic Planning Statement (LSPS) identified, through public consultation, that the Newcastle community highly valued accessible special places centred on our natural environment, public spaces and parks. Such places help develop a sense of community and opportunities for people to connect. Our Newcastle community was most concerned about the loss of trees and public green spaces. (p8 LSPS 2021) The importance of trees and public green spaces was again highlighted in the public exhibition. The 20-year land use planning vision, detailed in the LSPS 2021, prioritises:

- A green city with an urban environment which is greener with natural areas retained, protected and enhanced with more public park and street plantings.
- A liveable city where our community has accessible and walkable streets, parks and gathering spaces in each neighbourhood and local centre.

Planning Priority 4 (LSPS 2021) clearly states the benefits of green spaces and that, moving towards 2040, 'greenspace across the City of Newcastle is maintained and improved.' (p34 LSPS 2021) As detailed, this principle aligns with State and CN Priorities and is consistent with Newcastle 2030 strategies

- 2.2a Provide and advocate for protection and rehabilitation of natural areas
- 3.1a Provide quality parkland and recreation facilities that are diverse, accessible and responsive to changing needs

- 5.1a Ensure our suburbs are preserved, enhanced and promoted, while also creating opportunities for growth

**In conclusion,** it is vital to retain the freely accessible, public, open green space provided by Blackley and Wallarah Ovals.

The threat of a Blackley/Wallarah Ovals development has had a significant effect on the local community over the last 18 months. It has created anxiety, stress and uncertainty as well as fear about the impact of flooding, loss of green space and traffic congestion on the surrounding areas. The huge impact on Lambton High School continues to be very concerning. The time and emotional costs to communicate with ministers and council members, attend meetings and write submissions have taken a toll. A recent announcement that an undeveloped 5ha site in Maryland will be developed into a new district level sports facility in the Creek Road sporting precinct does provide hope that alternative and more suitable sites may be considered. Basketball players and supporters deserve a new stadium but not at the expense of other sporting codes or the local community's access to precious green spaces.

The revised HSIC SSDA (SSD-65595459) should not go ahead, but rather an alternate site be investigated.