

Email sent to TfNSW following a face to face meeting in Surry Hills where I walked members of TfNSW round the area and pointed out areas for them to consider. The only response was thanks we will forward to the design team. On reviewing the treatment of this area in the EIS it is evident that issues/thoughts raised in this "community consultation" meeting were just ignored.

TfNSW must demonstrate how they handled this feedback and how solutions were included in their EIS as many of the issues of access etc remain

+++++

From: Simon <scarr8064@gmail.com>

Date: 24 July 2013 1:45:07 pm AEST

To: Georgina Dorsett <Georgina.Dorsett@transport.nsw.gov.au>

Subject: TfNSW and Simon Carr Meeting Notes

**Meeting Between TfNSW and Simon Carr, Resident of Surry Hills
5 July 2013
in area between Bourke Street and South Dowling**

The TfNSW stated that they were there to hear comments regarding local issues around the design of the route through the area of Olivia Gardens. They would not be discussing any solutions or make specific comment on matters raised. They agreed to write up notes of the meeting and allow Mr Carr to agree them as a record before submitting to the design team for consideration.

Mr Carr thanked TfNSW for holding the meeting and for visiting the area. He advised that his property (32 Parkham Street) backed onto the proposed route and therefore would be significantly impacted by the design of the route. Also as a resident of Surry Hills he was very concerned that the general impact of the Devonshire Street route, chosen by the Minister (with no local consultation), did not destroy this heritage area within Sydney. He wished it be noted that Surry Hills had now become a vibrant area of Sydney supporting a mixed community of residents, light commercial business and cafes. In addition, the number of families had increased, regenerating the many kindergartens and schools in the area. Surry Hills is already served by an excellent public transport network, cycling paths and footpaths whilst maintaining a number of arterial roads for vehicles.

Mr Carr was concerned about the potential use of remnant land should Olivia Gardens be demolished. He stated that its use for a rail stabling yard or for a higher/larger apartment complex would not be environmentally acceptable to residents. TfNSW stated that neither of these options were being considered. He suggested that the area could be used for additional parking and/or parkland.

General Comment on Devonshire Street Route

Mr Carr raised a general concern over the choice of the route. The TfNSW team explained the issues regarding a tunnel. These related to the support structure under the Eastern Distributor being some 20m below the road and requiring a rail tunnel to go too deep. This engineering fact was accepted however Mr Carr raised the logic of choosing Devonshire Street as an acceptable alternative rather than utilising the wider and more environmentally acceptable routes along Forveaux and Albion Streets (5 lanes wide rather than just two) .

These routes would also give access to a significantly larger user catchment area. TfNSW said that study had shown that the steeper gradient of these streets would increase the running costs over the life of the project due to increased stress on the engines. Mr Carr suggested that this might be a compromise that the Government should consider in order to reduce the environmental impact of the rail line passing through Surry Hills.

Mr Carr's view is that Devonshire is too narrow to afford both rail and vehicular use and questioned how the design would allow access to the multiple lane ways that enter and exit this Devonshire, without causing serious disruption for emergency services, service providers, commercial businesses and residents. Even with a lane of traffic in one direction this would still force volumes of traffic onto the already overcrowded parallel streets and remove the marked cycle route safety lane.

Safety Issues

Mr Carr raised safety issues of a rail line passing in close proximity to a kindergarten school at Riley St with a park opposite. Also passing close to the growing Bourke Street Primary School where students increasingly arrive on foot and by bicycle - all such paths would be dissected by the proposed rail line.

Whilst appreciating this is a "light" rail, the safety concerns from these large vehicles passing through this heavily populated area and along narrow streets are very significant. TfNSW recognised this as a major issue.

Environment and Heritage

In Wimbo Park, Mr Carr drew TfNSW attention to the environmental nature of the area - quiet, safe, peaceful and a place for the local community to gather. Even in winter months this park area is well used by all residents and is a valuable asset for cafes in the area eg Bourke Street Bakery.

He also stated the heritage significance of this park and its importance to the local community. There are three commemorative plaques in the park identifying the significance of the Park - this history must be recognised and cannot be destroyed.

In addition, he discussed the heritage listing of Bourke Street that does not allow any change to the street scape. It was noted that the Minister can override any such heritage listing, however it would be a great shame for a project that was supposed to be improving the area to overrule Heritage considerations just so this route could be made feasible to suite political requirements.

The park is surrounded by numerous old trees which would have to be destroyed due to this choice of route.

TfNSW noted that the route was planned to pass through one of Sydney's historic villages. They indicated that were not aware of the historic significance of the park

Noise and Vibration

The impact of noise and vibration of a rail line through this quiet residential area was discussed. The measurement of these factors is highly complex. Mr Carr stressed that the area around Olivia Gardens is very quiet and tranquil, the passing of a train every couple of minutes will have a major environmental impact on the area. Mr Carr suggested that through this area the impact could be reduced by having the trains enter an above ground tunnel (or one that is half sunk) thus reducing the impact on the area.

It is also a concern that Mr Lock has publically stated that the trains between Central and Moore Park will be double the length during events at the show ground thus significantly increasing the environmental impact.

NfNSW recognised the issue of noise but stated that it would be up to the EIS and Planning Department to decide if the increased levels of noise and vibration were "acceptable". They said they made every effort to "**minimise**" these.

Parking Stress

Like all areas in Sydney, Surry Hills is very short of parking to cater for the residents and visitors. The building of the Bourke Street cycleway 2 years ago lost 75 spaces in this area and the City of Sydney stated that they would work closely with NSW RTA to open up new spaces to ease the stress. Over the last 2 years no new spaces have been found.

Mr Carr said that his assessment is that about 125 spaces will be lost on Devonshire Street due to the rail line. He could not understand how this number, or any, new spaces could be found. The result will be increases stress for residents and visitors. He suggested that a Resident's Only scheme could be introduced for spaces in front of residential properties. This was an internationally accepted practice and would have the benefits of discouraging casual visitors from driving into the area (they now have a rail system), reduce congestion and provide residents with spaces to leave their cars when not used.

Residents should be encouraged to use their cars less but it has to be recognised that most residents wish to own their own car and do need it on occasion.

NfNSW stated they were looking at ways to "**minimise**" the loss of parking.

Access

The areas either side of Devonshire Street are a maze of narrow laneways that provide access around the area for emergency services, city services, deliveries and residents. They are also part of the heritage character of the area.

Mr Carr focused on the Olivia Gardens area;

- Nobbs Lane, Parkham Place and Parkham Lane are accessed by emergency, general services and residents via Nobbs Street and Parkham Place. The turn from the South Dowling end of Parkham Street is too narrow for larger vehicles. It is therefore critical to the access design that Parkham Place remains open to traffic, allowing access to Parkham Lane for larger vehicles.
- Parkham Place is one way between Parkham Street and Parkham Lane, therefore vehicles need to exit Parkham Lane using Parkham Place across to Nobbs Street. This will obviously require crossing the proposed rail line. The other option is to open Parkham Lane to Bourke Street however this would require destroying even more of the Wimbo Park area.
- Parkham Street is too narrow to allow larger vehicles to pass. Removal of parking on one side of the street is **NOT** acceptable to residents or the school. (TfNSW stated that the school had already been in contact with them regarding ensuring continued access for parents to drop/collect children and for teacher parking) The area adjacent to the school is vital for drop off and pick up of school children and the parking on the street is vital for the residents and school teachers.
- Emergency services, city services, deliveries and residents need to be able to move efficiently around the area. It is not acceptable that these users will be forced onto already congested major routes just to move around the local area.

Congestion

Mr Carr raised serious concern over the environmental impacts of the rail route on the congestion in Surry Hills. The proposed route will cross major arterial routes of Chalmers, Elizabeth, Riley, Crown, Bourke, and South Dowling. With a train crossing these routes every 90 seconds (train each way every 3 minutes @ peak commute times).

Mr Carr questioned how this would not have a major impact on congestion in Surry Hills.

TfNSW stated that this was being considered in order to "**minimise**" the impact.

Design Considerations

Mr Carr suggested :

- The line be enclosed in an above ground tunnel as it passes through Olivia Gardens to reduce the environmental impact (noise, vibration, privacy)
- The land blocks of Parkham Street properties could be extended to be the same length as those on Nobbs Street by moving the lane way. This would allow the building of garages on those properties. This would have many advantages – improved safety, reduction of stress for on-street parking, noise & vibration buffer and improved privacy. Also it was noted that Parkham Lane is subject to flooding and needs redesigning. TfNSW voiced concern over this idea as it might appear that private residents were benefitting. Mr Carr stated that such a concept would only maintain losses for residents and the Minister constantly spoke about the benefits to private and commercial businesses from the introduction of the rail line – why should residents not be allowed to maintain their investments as well.
- Planting of vegetation along the rail line as per the Portland system to “soften” the impact of the steel and concrete lines.
- Consideration must be given to Devonshire Street being a shared zone for trains and vehicles. It is not unreasonable to consider that vehicles can use or cross the rail lines to get round other parked vehicles or to cross the rail line. This is an accepted practice in Portland or in Melbourne and other cities. This would mean the light rail system accepting a compromise that they are not the only transport method
- A loss or restriction of Surry Hills’s excellent bus service is not acceptable. The retention of the Bondi service that runs down Devonshire Street is critical. As are the services along Crown Street which bring people into and through the area from the rapidly growing areas of Zetland – they have no other public transport.

Moore Park

Mr Carr raised concerns over any loss of land in Moore Park. This area is heavily used by the school, sports clubs and local residents. It provides vital playing fields and parkland for residents to enjoy. It is also the areas only off-lead dog park.

TfNSW stated that a cut and cover option was being considered that would retain most of the Moore Park facilities.

Build Phase

Mr Carr raised major concerns over the impact on the area during the build phase. The line passes through this residential and light commercial area that already has major access limitations due to the original design (100+years ago). Mr Carr questioned how the construction traffic was going to access the area and move around without causing major trauma for everyone in the area. He recognised that major projects such as this do have an impact but wanted it recognised by TfNSW and NSW Planning that the restricted nature of the Surry Hills area will make this impact much worse. The impact during the build phase is likely to destroy this historic area of Sydney forever.

Final Comments

Mr Carr wanted it noted that he is a strong supporter of improving Sydney’s public transport system – he uses the train to get to work each day. He also supports the light rail project. He does however still question the route along Devonshire Street as many, if not all, of the above issues he has raised would not be encountered to this degree if the existing thoroughfares of Forveaux and Albion Streets were used. The currently chosen routes will need significant compromise by all parties. It is likely to damage the area for ever and cause significant stress for businesses during the build phase. It is also his view that this route will limit the expansion of the light rail in the future due to the restrictions that this narrow thoroughfare and residential area will impose.

Mr Carr also encouraged that TfNSW correctly apply learnings from other light rail projects elsewhere in the world. He especially noted Portland Oregon, as the previous head of this project was now employed by TfNSW. He noted their planning criteria that were sympathetic to local areas, their engagement process with the community, their use of modern design to reduce the impacts and their use of hubs to transfer commuters from the rail system to lighter impact systems as they progressed into higher density areas.

He also questioned the use of the terms "**minimise, minimal and compromise**" by TfNSW and asked for a definition of the terms. He was advised that this was down to the determination by the NSW Planning Department.