



Action for Public Transport (N.S.W.) Inc.

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6 August 2017

Lindfield Learning Village

Submission on EIS

Action for Public Transport (NSW) is a transport advocacy group active in Sydney since 1974. We promote the interests of beneficiaries of public transport; both passengers, and the wider community. We make this submission on the Environmental Impact Statement dated 8 June 2017 for the Lindfield Learning Village project.

Summary

APTNSW is concerned that the transport arrangements discussed in Section 7.4 and Appendix J of the EIS will not permit the proposed school to function acceptably. An alternative scheme is put forward. The school warrants a dedicated fleet of buses; the EIS should be expanded to cover the acquisition and operation of the buses.

Discussion

The EIS is for a K-12 school, with about 2100 pupils, on the former KCAE/UTS site in Eton Road, Lindfield. Following UTS' decision to leave the campus, parts of the site were rezoned for high-rise residential and parts for low-density. At the time of writing, there are over 200 home units on the site (most of them occupied) and ten houses are under construction. The former Film Australia (later Screen Australia) site immediately north of the site is being developed for further high-rise residential. By 2019, there will be about 350 residences on and adjacent to the site. The nearest shop is Quix at the top of Gladstone Parade, which is at least 1500 metres from all of the residences. Continual resident car traffic can therefore be expected into and out of the site. But there is no reason to believe that a significant number of Lindfield Learning Village pupils will live on-site.

The catchment area of the school is not clear from the EIS. But because the school has special policies (see below) which might limit its appeal to some parents, the catchment area is likely to be larger than that of typical comprehensive schools. The school's location is off in one corner of a residential area, bounded by bush and steep hills on three sides and close to Lane Cove River, restricting the walking catchment. For secondary students, a 1500m walk to the school would be from the area between Polding Road and Shirley Road at furthest. This area would be reduced for primary students (there is an overlap with Lindfield Public School catchment) and further reduced for infants. As a result, not as many students are likely to walk to school as is the case with Killara High. An efficient bus service will be essential.

The principal transport constraint on the site is its single entry point from Eton Road. Construction of a

second access road down to Lady Game Drive was mooted in the 1980s but did not proceed. A steep walkway (Symons Track) has recently been opened near the proposed second access road. The walkway climb of about 50 metres from Lady Game Drive to near the oval has about 200 steps and so many turns through bush and rocks that it could not be used for general access even if it connected the school to any residential areas.

The EIS seems to acknowledge the bottleneck but states (paragraph 2.11, page 18):

Once completed in 2019, Sydney Metro Northwest will provide direct access to locations throughout Greater Sydney including Macquarie Park and Chatswood, and direct access to the Sydney Trains and Sydney Buses network. The new metro is expected to provide more frequent and efficient train services from Epping to Chatswood and will provide additional public transport capacity to the site.

This statement is puzzling. Capacity on Sydney Metro Northwest will be of no help whatsoever in getting school pupils through the bottleneck at the Eton/Abingdon intersection.

The EIS goes on to suggest that parent cars can be admitted freely to the site for drop-offs. Paragraph 3.4.2 (page 22) states:

The proposed drop-off and pick-up location is on the upper level car park and consists of 62 at-grade parking spaces, as shown in Figure 9. Minor works to the existing kerbs is proposed to create a turning head at the existing loading dock area, thereby allowing vehicles to make a U-turn to access the drop-off bays. The dropoff arrangement would allow 10 vehicles to queue at the drop-off bay at any one-time and would require 21 spaces to be converted to drop-off bays during the morning peak. It is anticipated that these bays would then function as parking spaces for visitors, outside of the school peak hours. A similar arrangement is proposed for the pick-up arrangement during the afternoon.

The difficulty with the EIS' suggestion that parent cars can be allowed on campus is that it would result in unacceptable traffic congestion immediately before and after school, especially in wet weather. Childcare facilities for 94 children would add to the traffic expected on campus. Buses would have to be relegated to the existing 565 bus turnaround bay immediately outside the Eton Road entrance. Indeed, paragraph 3.4.3 states that *school and public buses will continue to use the existing bus bay on Eton Road at the entrance to the site.* Unfortunately, this bus bay can accommodate only one 12-metre bus. EIS Appendix J explores the ramifications of relying on the sole bus bay as the main method of student access to the campus. It comes to the conclusion that school starting times should be staggered between 7:30 a.m. and 9 a.m. so that 2100 students can be delivered to the school daily.

School timetables work in periods of 40 or 45 minutes. The periods are co-ordinated so that teachers can be moved around classes, providing a full timetable for students and allowing good utilisation of specialist teachers. Let us suppose that 33% of the school needs to be ready at 7:30, another 33% at 8:15 and the rest at 9am. For a 2100-pupil school, that might mean that 700 students need to be ready at 7:30, 600 of whom have arrived by bus. Allowing 4 minutes for each 60-passenger bus to unload and clear the bay means that 10 buses totalling 600 students need 40 minutes to arrive. So the first bus must arrive at 6:50 a.m. followed by nine others at 4-minute headways. Such early arrivals would be before dawn on school days in March, June, July and October. Worse, most of the 700 students would have had to leave home before dawn. This arrangement would be uncomfortable for students and teachers and would be unacceptable to many parents.

There are other difficulties with the staggered-start suggestion:

- extra sessions such as extension classes, orchestra, chess, drama etc. are traditionally held immediately before or after school. That would be impossible with staggered starts.
- the school's policy is to permit children to advance by their abilities not age. Hansard (NSWLA, 16

July) mentions *opportunities for students to excel at their own pace*, presumably separately for different subjects. These opportunities generally require enough classes to be running to present class-swapping opportunities; such opportunities are reduced if pupils start and end their days at staggered times.

- families with more than one child at the school might well have to bring them separately due to different start times. Working hours for a part-time parent might thereby be reduced.

Appendix J does not address the matter of sport however there was an article in *The Sydney Morning Herald* 20 July by Alister Henskens MP asserting the importance of sport for schoolchildren. Because the campus is so constrained, with only one short oval, a modest gymnasium, and very limited playground space, it will be desirable to take large numbers of students to sports facilities elsewhere. Other schools in the district, such as Lindfield East Public School and Killara High School, do this already even though both are close to good public ovals; it is likely that Lindfield Learning Village will need a steady stream of buses taking students to sport and bringing them back afterwards. Again, the Eton Road bus bay would be inadequate. It is essential to provide more facilities for buses. And because the buses would be in fairly continuous use between 8am and 4pm, it would be desirable and viable for the school to control a number (perhaps 5 or more, depending on size) of dedicated buses. These buses would be used during the school day for sport transport and would be available before and after school to supplement delivery buses.

The obvious place for more bus bays is the campus itself. There is a 95-metre indented area along the southern side of Shout Ridge which could be marked as 6 bus bays. Buses could stop there and turn round in the Hamilton Corner loop. The indent could be lengthened to allow more bus bays. And it might be possible to put some bays in Hamilton Corner. Note that Koola Avenue outside Killara High School has ten marked bus bays for a population of about 1500 students; as discussed above, Lindfield Learning Village's walking catchment is probably smaller than Killara High School's so a higher proportion of students will need transport than is the case at Killara. The target would be to get perhaps 30 buses, carrying 1800 students, through the gate in about 30 minutes. The buses would have to come from dispersed locations including other suburbs; it would not be possible to load so many buses at e.g. Lindfield Station nor to turn them off the Pacific Highway down Grosvenor Road in morning peak traffic.

The proposed Lindfield Village Hub could be an interchange point for transport to/from Lindfield Learning Village. Its site is easily accessible from Lindfield railway station and nearby bus stops. It might also be suitable for car drop-offs.

Conclusions

Campus roads should be organised to provide priority for buses over parent cars. It is recognised that resident cars will still need to move but strategies should be investigated to encourage resident movements toward off-peak times. Also, the childcare facility should likewise be encouraged to focus car movements outside school peaks, perhaps by charging long daycare rates with no concession for shorter periods.

Recommendations

- Don't have staggered starts.
- Allow buses onto campus.
- Operate a small fleet of dedicated buses.
- Offer long-day childcare only.
- Prohibit parent cars from campus at peak times with exceptions for mobility problems. Kindergarten drop-offs and pickups would have to be (say) 15 minutes after the morning peak and 15 minutes before afternoon peak respectively.
- Provide drop-off and pick-up facilities at appropriate locations in Eton Road and either Abingdon Road or Westbourne Road. Some cover from rain might be appropriate.
- Devise tactics for deterring parent and other unessential traffic from Eton west of Austral and Abingdon west of Westbourne during school peak hours. Efficient shuttle services should be

provided inside that area.

- Devise a procedure for controlling resident cars on campus in the event of any emergency.

Jim Donovan

Secretary

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