

Our Ref: CN: 147295

15 November 2019

Mr David Gainsford
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Dear Mr Gainsford

Proposed Modification Windsor Bridge Replacement Project

As resolved by Hawkesbury City Council at its Ordinary Meeting on 12 November 2019, please find below Council's submission regarding the proposed modification of the Windsor Bridge Replacement project.

The submission has a number of subject headings which are the critical points of opposition to this modification and the process undertaken by RMS. In summary these are:

- Traffic efficiency - a lost opportunity to improve traffic movements on all intersections in the vicinity of the Windsor Bridge, e.g access to the boat ramp in Governor Phillip Park
- Traffic studies and data discrepancies
- Community engagement / consultation - time provided and the fact that the traffic data was not made available to the public until the last day of the consultation period (23 October 2019 to 7 November 2019)
- Conservation Management Plan
- Loss of public amenity
- Noise and vibration

Background

The Windsor Bridge Replacement Project dates back many years and over that time the community have consistently highlighted points in relation to:

- Traffic issues and traffic studies
- Thompson Square - its cultural and heritage significance
- The need for open, transparent and evidence based decision making
- The wider area of Windsor that has linkages to the Windsor Bridge Replacement Project. For example the existing boat ramp in Governor Phillip Park, established in the mid 1900's, is a popular destination from which people launch their boats. In 2015 the NSW State Government allocated \$300,000 towards the upgrade of the facilities under its Better Boating Program. The application does not appear to adequately address the issue of access to the boat ramp.





Traffic Efficiency

One of the key objectives for the Windsor Bridge replacement project is to improve traffic efficiency and reduce traffic delays and congestion.

Council is concerned that the current modification request, at this late stage of the current construction process, will not provide any relief for the current traffic congestion in the vicinity of Bridge, Macquarie, George and Court Streets. This seems to be a lost opportunity to improve the overall traffic movements on all intersections.

It is therefore a necessity that Council work with the relevant stakeholders to develop long term traffic solutions for Windsor.

This point is further complicated by both the existing and proposed traffic arrangements, as contained in the modification application. There is a lack of clarity and consideration of matters such as Right Turns from Bridge Street into George Street. The application does not appear to adequately address:

- Existing Condition 46 - which flags limitations on vehicles travelling south and turning right into George Street - what does the application propose in relation to this issue?
- Travelling north, no right turn is proposed from Bridge Street into George Street
- The existing transitional arrangements in lane marking between South Creek and Macquarie Street - which includes the intersection with Court Street. It appears that the Court Street intersection is where boat owners will have to turn right to access the Governor Phillip Boat Ramp. It is outside the study area for the modification application and no information has been provided to outline how this arrangement will operate and what, if any, impacts will be experienced by the residents of Court Street.

Similar observations can be made regarding other areas located outside the current artificially imposed Project Area.

In the short time, since the modification was placed on exhibition, members of the local community have identified alternative options for addressing the issue, for example:

- Extending the Macquarie Street / Bridge Street signalised intersection to include traffic lights at the intersection with Court St. Using this expanded intersection to control the flow of traffic across George Street and the Replacement Windsor Bridge.
- In the context of the above:
 - Removing the proposed traffic lights on the intersection of George and Bridge Streets.
 - Limiting all traffic in and out of George St to thru traffic or left turn only.

Some of these community generated options may warrant further exploration and modelling as a viable alternative to the currently proposed modification.

Traffic Studies and Data - Designing for current and future use

In the 2017 traffic study it estimates that an average of 25,000 vehicles could travel over the bridge on a week day by 2026.

In the RMS 2012 EIS traffic predication for 2026 it states 24,000 vehicles, which is a difference of 1,000 vehicles.



These figures are misquoted in the new report and public newsletter, which states a difference of 2,000 vehicles.

There are a number of discrepancies between the reports. Therefore Council requests that the following additional information be made available to Council and the community (Council notes some of this information has been provided, however, asks that it be made publically available):

1. Traffic data (movements, numbers and time of day) that relates to a more realistic project catchment, including:
 - 1.1. Court Street and related access roads to the Governor Philip Boat Ramp
 - 1.2. Bridge Street to Fitzroy Bridge, South Creek
 - 1.3. Bridge Street to the Wilberforce Road/Freemans Reach Road intersection
 - 1.4. Macquarie Street to Kable Street
2. Details of the 2017 and 2019 Traffic Surveys, together with:
 - 2.1. A summary of the differences between them
 - 2.2. Details of the actual counts (date and time) that informed those differences

Community Engagement / Consultation

The project modification does not meet the acceptable standards for community engagement and endorsement.

RMS provided a document titled *Windsor Bridge Replacement Project Traffic Counts Data Comparison Between 2017 and 2019 which is dated 29 October 2019*. The document was received via email on 5 November at 6:41pm and was first sighted on Wednesday 6 November 2019. This is 24 hours prior to the conclusion of the nominated 23 October 2019 to 7 November 2019 exhibition period.

Please note the RMS document titled *Windsor Bridge Replacement Project Traffic Counts Data Comparison Between 2017 and 2019* is dated 29 October 2019, which is after the consultation period had commenced.

It would appear to Council that the exhibition period cannot commence until all relevant information is available for consideration by any interested party. As such the exhibition of the modification may not be legally compliant. Council is concerned about the very narrow timeframe in which to lodge a submission.

Therefore Council formally requests that the notification period be re-opened and extended for a period of 14 days after all the relevant information has been provided by RMS to ensure the public have had adequate time to view the information.

Thompson Square Conservation Management Plan

An original condition of the approval for the Windsor Bridge replacement project was for the RMS to complete a Strategic Conservation Management Plan. This was placed on exhibition in March 2017. This plan covers only 50% of the Thompson Square Conservation Area.

Hawkesbury City Council commissioned a Thompson Square Conservation Management Plan dated December 2018 for the entire area.

Thompson Square and its immediate surrounds is recognised as the oldest surviving public square in Australia, dating from the 1790's and formally named in 1811 by Governor Macquarie. The Conservation Area is listed on the NSW State Heritage Register.

The purpose of the Conservation Management Plan is to ensure that the historically significant features of the Thompson Square Conservation Area are preserved for future generations.



The proposed Modification Windsor Bridge Replacement Project application does not include any meaningful reference to the Thompson Square Conservation Management Plan. The modification is not explicit as to exactly where the portion of Thompson Square is required. Council requests detailed information as to where the land will be taken from i.e. is it from the outer edge of the existing footpath or from the project boundary / new footpath; and how the project will consider the Thompson Square Conservation Management Plan.

Because Thompson Square Conservation Area is of considerable cultural significance, works should be carried out in accordance with a recognised cultural conservation methodology such as that of the Australia ICOMOS Burra Charter. This has not been addressed in the modification application.

The Conservation Management Plan does not make any reference to the status of the previously proposed Stage 2 works on Fitzroy Bridge. Stage 2 proposed the conversion of the existing Fitzroy Bridge pedestrian walkway to an additional traffic lane. However, Fitzroy Bridge is outside the Project Area and no information has been provided.

Council requires additional information to ensure that it can complete a proper and informed assessment of the proposed modification. This should include:

- Options and cost estimates considered as part of the process of adopting the currently preferred option, including details of options considered to eliminate and/or reduce the area of Thompson Square proposed to be alienated by the proposed road/bridge widening.

Loss of Public Amenity

The Proposed Modification Windsor Bridge Replacement Project requires further alienation of a strip of Thompson Square to the west of the bridge approach - up to 3 metres in width, for the purpose of widening the bridge approach from one lane to two lanes, so as to allow traffic to merge before crossing the bridge.

Council requests that exact and accurate details of the total additional area to be reclaimed from the claimed 500 square metres needs to be provided.

Noise and Vibration

RMS has not provided adequate details on expected noise and vibration effects on nearby residents, users of the parkland and the surrounding area.

The RMS provided document titled *Windsor Bridge Replacement Project Traffic Counts Data Comparison Between 2017 and 2019* sites figures of a high traffic number of up to 25,000 vehicles per day by 2036 (18% of these being heavy vehicles/trucks) grinding uphill and downhill using exhaust brakes which will result in a disastrous level of road noise, in particular, for homes in Windsor, users of the parkland and open space and one that will reverberate throughout the surrounding area.

Council requests the RMS to provide a Noise and Vibration report.

In Conclusion

Hawkesbury City Council, along with the Community, has grave and justifiable concerns about whether a proper process has been followed by RMS in lodging a modification with little to no community consultation. This is contrary to the principles of open and transparent community engagement.

Once Council and the community have access to this information they will be in a position to make a more meaningful contribution to both:



- the assessment of the current modification application and its implications for Thompson Square, the surrounding road network and residents impacted by changes in traffic patterns; and
- the development of long term plans to address traffic congestion in Windsor.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact me.

Regards

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