

Carlingford West School upgrades at 59-73 Felton Road Carlingford.

Application number SSD-10879802

Objection

I strongly object to the proposal for a number of reasons

- The site cannot be accessed safely from the local dead-end streets.
- The roads and footpaths are inadequate for the size of this popular and successful primary school
- The proposed design capacity will be exceeded before completion, as it is in a designated high growth area.
- There will be a significant negative impact on the community, in terms of liveability and safety.

Traffic congestion

The Taylor Thomson Whitting (NSW) Pty Ltd traffic report does not adequately address the traffic issues surrounding Carlingford West Primary school. Below is some background information.

The traffic measures that Parramatta Council has implemented over the last 5 to 10 years to help the flow of traffic have failed. The fundamental issue is that the roads are too narrow, and access to the school is from dead-end local streets.

People driving to the school have not been complying with the road rules and continue to park in No Parking, No stopping, across driveways and within 1 metre of double lines. Police and council rangers have been unsuccessful in their attempts to change the behaviour of non-complying drivers. This results in continuing safety issues for, not only the students and parents that walk to the school, but also the residents of the area who are often denied the opportunity to leave or return to their homes during the morning and afternoon drop off and pick up times.

Below is a photo of the primary access road to the main entrance of Carlingford West Primary school, Felton Road (east). It is a narrow, dead end local street, which is totally unsuitable for accessing a school of this size. There are other access points to the school but they are also narrow local streets which often become gridlocked because the main access road Felton Road (east) is gridlocked and prevents access to or from the other access points.



The Taylor Thomson Whitting (NSW) Pty Ltd Traffic Report 2021 fails to adequately consider a number of issues. These issues were raised in the community consultation process and documented in the Social Impact Report. The traffic report also has not addressed emergency vehicle access during peak periods.

On page 35 of the Taylor Thomson Whitting report, regarding 2.9.3 traffic modelling. The report acknowledges that it is flawed as it does not address the queues on Felton Road, including the seven connected streets that depend on Felton Road (East). From a resident perspective it is not uncommon for a delay of 20 to 30 minutes to move from Ludmila Close to Pennant Hills Road. The road is gridlocked as vehicles enter the area and relief only occurs when the school traffic flow changes.

The Taylor Thomson Whitting traffic study restricted itself in the morning from 8.30 to 9.30 for motorised and unmotorised access. As the school start time is 9.25 this study missed a critical peak that occurs after 9.30 am. Parents typically gather either in or around the school, and wait for the congestion to ease before they leave the area. Traffic and pedestrian access issues remain until 9.45am.

4.3 Pedestrian facilities

The proposed raised zebra crossings will need to be controlled with a School Crossing Supervisor as streaming pedestrians will further gridlock vehicle access and create frustrations and reckless driving. The School Crossing Supervisor on the Baker Street crossing has helped traffic flow and student safety.

Operational impacts 5.0

The traffic report states there will not be an increase in student population from this development proposal. This is not correct. The development proposal will make the school more desirable and with continued high-density developments being approved, traffic issues will continue to worsen. The student population is estimated to grow 9.2% pa.

The Taylor Thomson Whitting (NSW) Pty Ltd Report 2021, in describing Felton Road (east) and Baker Street state that “there is a single lane in each direction with various parking restrictions” What is not noted is that parking restrictions are not complied with and that Felton Road (east) is a narrow dead-end street. Felton road (east) is also the sole access to the following streets.

1. Karingal Ave
2. Pindari Avenue
3. Muruba Ave
4. Hilar Avenue
5. Ludmila Close
6. Niangla Place
7. Cressfield Ave

The residents of the above streets are concerned that emergency vehicles could be delayed by 30 minutes in peak times due to the gridlocked congestion and no alterative access roads.

The traffic report does not consider the cumulative effect of the three schools within 200 metres of each other. The schools being James Ruse High School, Cumberland High school and Carlingford West primary. Each of these school rely on Baker Street for access and this street simply cannot cope with the buses and vehicle movements during peak times. This is all compounded by vehicles parking legally and illegally as parents drop off and pick students.

No viable strategy has been proposed in the proposal to reduce private vehicle usage. Alternative travel modes are not realistic or viable as the roads are simply too narrow for adequate alternatives such as cycling or walking.

Footpaths

The previous photo also shows the inadequacy of the footpaths for the volume of students and parents with prams to access the school. The residents and the school principal are aware that the footpaths are not able to cope as they are too narrow and too close to the road. The school has been advocating for parents to walk rather than drive however as the footpaths are inadequate, many parents are reverting to driving as they feel unsafe with the volume of cars so close to narrow footpaths and frustrated drivers who jostle to try and drop of students.

The school has allocated staff to try and ensure flow of traffic, with limited effect. Local residents appreciate the extra effort by teachers and staff to try and make the narrow dead-end streets work. However, it is just not possible to make these local street work.

The implication in the Taylor Thomson Whitting (NSW) Pty Ltd Report 2021 on page 24 at 2.6.1 those Pedestrian facilities are adequate by stating that footpaths exist, is disappointing and disingenuous.

Construction traffic congestion

During construction all the teachers and construction workers will be parking on the streets which will be a significant safety issue. There will be close to 200 additional vehicles parked around the school plus the residents. Parked cars are a major reason for the poor traffic flow and residents' frustrations.

It is hard to image how heavy vehicles will be able to access the site with all the parked cars in the narrow local streets.

Cycling

I am a keen cyclist, but to promote cycling to the school is highly irresponsible and sadly reflects no understanding of the chaos and unsafe road and footpath activity during school drop off and pick up times. The traffic study correctly identifies **no** students currently cycle and are unlikely to ever cycle.

The proposed painted bicycle lanes on Felton Road fails to identify how inappropriate this suggestion is and indicates that Council and other stakeholders have not actually visited the area at peak times.

Parking

Teachers and other staff currently park in the surrounding streets which compounds the poor traffic flow in the local neighbourhood. The proposed carpark of 53 spaces for 106 teachers is totally inadequate. For a school in this residential area there should be a car space for every employee.

Many parents also park and walk which further compromises the local streets in relation to traffic flow.

New Build

This development should be considered a new build. The school was originally conceived and approved in 1967 for a capacity of 670 students. There has been incremental creep to the current student population to 1650 plus. With over 110 teachers plus ancillary visitors parking in the local streets.

The site is not suitable for a school of this size and bulk which can be only accessed from small local dead-end streets.

It is appreciated that the Department of Education finds itself in an awkward position, by failing to have planned for the rapid and continuous growth in this area. The solution should be a new additional second primary school somewhere within the catchment to permit safe and easy walking access.

Population growth

The target size for the school is 1610 which is already exceeded. Carlingford West Primary school is a very successful and popular school which attracts young families to the catchment from all over Sydney. There is a perception that it is a feeder to James Ruse (Selective) High school. The population in Carlingford continues to grow as high-rise developments continue to be approved which will further make the site unsuitable. The apartments are attractive to young families as they are within the school's catchment which means that proposed school will not cope with the growing population and the local narrow streets certainly will not.

Proposed catchment changes are illogical as all surrounding primary schools already exceed capacity. Flagging catchment changes is a simple deflection from the underlying problem of insufficient primary schools in the area.

Primary schools are the most fundamental infrastructure for a community and they must be able to be accessed safely. The proposal fails to address the most basic criteria of safe access.

Consequential issues

Cumberland High School is the local high school and shares the same site effectively as the current primary school proposal. Basic forward planning would indicate that most of the primary school students should end up at Cumberland. It is accepted that a few students will go to selective high schools and some to private schools but most will go to the local high school. Cumberland is currently operating with about 700 students and enrolments are increasing. This is relevant, because it shows that the current development proposal is unsuitable for the current site as the High school will soon need to also expand. Note, Cumberland High school is also accessed for a single local dead-end street.

Below is the student enrolment profile for Carlingford West primary school from its annual reports

	2017	2018	2019	2020
Boys	612	711	798	867
Girls	588	648	730	811
Total	1200	1349	1528	1678

It shows the rapid and consistent increase in students that will flow to Cumberland High school that has reached its capacity.

Social Impact assessment report

The report correctly identifies the communities concerns with this significant development. The report states how

- local council ovals are already inadequate and overused,
- the schools open space is at risk from future demountable classrooms
 - The principal has acknowledged that demountable classrooms will be required even after the development.
- traffic is an ongoing issue
- green travel options are to be developed while acknowledging narrow dead-end streets.

Yet the report somehow concludes that the proposal would create a low positive impact on the community. The tone and content of the report should have assessed the outcome as medium to high negative impact on the community.

Conclusion

No matter how well designed the new school is, it is simply impossible to access it safely with the existing narrow local streets in a high growth area. At best it is a short-term solution to inadequate school infrastructure for the district. The negative impacts to the community through the construction phase and beyond are significantly understated.