

CARLINGFORD WEST PRIMARY SCHOOL SUBMISSION

In response to the Carlingford West Public School Upgrades uploaded to Planning NSW website, submissions concerning the upgrade are sought. I am a resident of Dunmore Avenue and have lived in the area for 41 years. Accordingly, I am making this submission in regards to several concerns, in particular the need to rebalance the student population at CWPS.

School Size and Class Sizes

The school upgrade is planned for 1610 students. Currently, the school has 1760 students and is expected to rise, to possibly 2400 students. Even if the school population can be contained at 1760, this excess of 150 students would need to be housed in demountable classrooms. Even at a 30:1 ratio of students to teacher this would involve 5 demountable classrooms. The purpose of the school upgrade is to house all students in permanent spaces. So even at the outset it is flawed.

Currently, Australian borders are closed to overseas arrivals due to the Covid-19 epidemic. Once these borders are opened again, it is anticipated by the School, Government departments and the local community that the demand for a place at Carlingford West Public School will rise even further. In addition, Parramatta LGA expects an additional 30,000 primary students to move into the LGA over the next twenty years. How does the current School Infrastructure plan accommodate these additional students and “provide additional school capacity on the site to meet...demand”?

Under the current Staffing Agreement, 2021-2023, the teacher staffing entitlements for primary schools is based on: “a state-wide average class size of 20 in Kindergarten, 22 in Year 1 and 24 in Year 2. No class need exceed 30 in Years 3-6”. As a retired teacher, I am very aware that larger classes equate to students getting less feedback and attention from teachers, causing some to fall behind. Smaller classes promote more individualised and one-on-one teaching learning.

At the community meeting held on Thursday 27 May, Infrastructure staff were asked about Carlingford West Primary School future student numbers and class accommodation. The response was that the state average class size was 23.8 students but to fit more students into Carlingford West, class sizes could rise to 30:1. This is an inappropriate solution to over-crowding at this popular school and may breach the Staffing Agreement.

Transport and Accessibility (Appendix 24)

Traffic and Safety

As a local resident, I am fully aware that “the local road network cannot accommodate additional traffic volumes” (Appendix 24 pp.2-3). It is having a significant impact on the quality of life of myself and other residents.

During the week, I attend Fernwood Fitness Centre at North Rocks Shopping Centre. The trip to the gym at 7.30 am, a distance of approximately 4 kilometres, takes about 6 minutes from Dunmore Avenue via Baker Street, Jenkins Road and North Rocks Road. The return trip at 9am cannot take the same route as primary school parents are in grid lock in Baker Street back to Lynch Close past James Ruse High (north). As an alternative, I travel via Bettington Road and Pennant Hills road with a view to turning left into Baker Street and then to Dunmore Avenue, approximately 100 metres. On many occasions, I have found that I cannot access Baker Street from the Parramatta direction, due to grid lock in Baker Street (south), leaving me “parked” on Pennant Hills Road and feeling very vulnerable and unsafe on this busy main road. In addition, a 6 minute trip becomes 30-45 minutes in duration.

Shopping, medical and other appointments outside the home, visits by tradies, and social interactions are all timed around school arrival and departure times, remembering that we have three schools in close proximity and their timings to co-ordinate. We are locked into or out of our homes during these periods. If an emergency arose and an ambulance was required it would be near impossible for them to access our home. This is a major safety issue for local residents.

As noted in the Social Impact Assessment Appendix 25), I am one of the residents whose life “has been impacted on how they carry out their daily activities”. For example, on the day (May 2020) of the SMH Herald photograph of Baker Street during the afternoon school peak, I had chosen to walk to Carlingford Court to shop rather than drive as I had missed the “time slot” to leave my home by car. As the SMH photograph shows, it was an appalling situation and “a recipe for a kid to be hit”, as Transport Minister Andrew Constance stated.

In the same article, Professor Raphael Grzebieta from the Transport and Road Safety Research unit at The University of NSW said “queues forming were dangerous for students”. Safety of CWPS students should be a high priority for all sections of the NSW Government and this is not evident in the CWPS planned upgrade.

In addition, Appendix 25 refers to the “challenges...with managing dangerous behaviours”. I have observed, cars regularly driving on the wrong side of Baker Street to turn right at Pennant Hills Road towards Parramatta. It is amazing that no head on collision or pedestrian accident has occurred to date. In all access streets, Felton Road East, Blenheim Road and Dunmore Avenue, parents continually stop/park illegally, particularly in the afternoon pick up times. Despite council rangers attending at request of residents, the behaviour continues. This is a significant safety issue for residents and students.

It is noted that currently 347 students live 2400mm from the school and 221 students live outside the catchment area (Table 2.7 Appendix 24), being 37% of the school population and are likely driven to school. Appendix 24 indicates that there is no increase in the capacity of existing Kiss and Ride zones in Felton Road West and Felton Road East so any reduction in congestion is unlikely to occur.

“Many stakeholders believe the proposal will exacerbate traffic congestion”. In Appendix 24, the traffic survey in May 2021, shows the largest volume of traffic is at the corner of Pennant Hills Road and Baker Street. There is a plan to set up traffic lights at the corner of Baker Street and Pennant Hills Road as part of the Baptist Care development. This will be the 5th set of lights from Bettington Road to Adderton Road, a distance of approximately 2.2 kms. This will not alleviate traffic congestion and will probably add to the problem.

Accessibility and Safety

One of the solutions proposed by the plan is to encourage alternative access to CWPS, by having up to 80 students (spaces provided) from Years 5 & 6, to bicycle to school. I am a regular bike rider and do not ride in the local area as I consider it too unsafe. Access to the CWPS is via Felton Road West and Felton Road East. The topography of these access streets does not encourage bike riding particularly by primary school aged children. Felton Road West is downhill from Arcadian Circuit to CWPS (see figure 2.21 of Appendix 24). Felton Road East is accessed by Baker Street which is also hilly and windy. It also leads uphill via Mosely Street to Pennant Hills Road.

In regards to using current local bike paths, the access is through Hunts Creek Reserve. Between Bettington Road and Northam Drive there is a sealed path which is suitable for young bike riders. From Northam Road to Baker Street, the path is only suitable for careful bush walking in many sections and not suitable for young bike riders. Even if this was sealed, it still leaves students vulnerable to accessing the school from the Reserve, uphill via local streets. It is noted that no student rode to school during the survey week in May so this is unlikely to change. “Encouraging ...cycling to school is not a realistic solution to resolving traffic issues.”

Public transport is not generally used by primary school students. It is unlikely to be an “attractive option for staff or parents” in the future. Fewer people in Carlingford travel to work by public transport compared to Parramatta LGA (Social Impact Assessment p. 12). Staff do not travel to CWPS by public transport.

The survey of CWPS staff in Appendix 24 shows that 100% of staff travel to school by car. The plan for the upgrade to CWPS provides car parking of 53 spaces for 106 staff. No visiting parking is provided. Thus 50% of staff and all visitors will need to park in neighbouring streets. As both Felton Road access streets have signage, these cars are being parked in our local streets and thus impacting on our safety and quality of life. It is unlikely that the provision of spaces for 6 staff to park their bike and provision of shower and change facilities will have any impact on the need for car spaces. If the school population grows, more staff cars will need to be accommodated in local streets.

As the Social Impact Assessment states, “there are considerable existing traffic and parking challenges associated with CWPS, with evidence this is having a negative impact on the community’s way of life and ability to access services and facilities...if rebalancing of students...is not successful...the local community will likely face additional negative impacts to its way of life and accessibility”.

Urgent Need for Rebalancing Student Numbers

The safety and welfare of CWPS students is not being addressed in the upgrade proposal. We implore you to review the planned upgrade for CWPS and address issues with the Department of Education regarding rebalancing of the student population as an urgent priority not years into the future. Without this rebalancing, traffic congestion will increase to an even more dangerous level and the safety and health of the community as well as quality of life will suffer further.

Annmaree Bernie

27/7/2021