

**Application number 20191011001551. Windsor Bridge replacement project: traffic design improvement**

**Submission from Defenders of Thompson Square Incorporated**

Defenders of Thompson Square Inc. is a community organisation committed to protecting and preserving the heritage of Windsor, and in particular the Thompson Square precinct. This commitment is at the heart of our interpretation of and response to the *Environmental Assessment Modification, September 2019*, and the associated *Windsor Bridge replacement project: Project update - traffic design improvement, October 2019*.

**Traffic flow**

This organisation acknowledges the current and anticipated traffic growth in Windsor which the proposed modification seeks to address. We acknowledge that improved traffic flow is an important consideration in the ongoing construction of the new bridge. However, we believe that potential modifications to the design of roads approaching the bridge and the bridge itself must minimise the negative impacts on the heritage of Thompson Square and the heritage tourism potential of Windsor. Windsor is a destination town that attracts visitors particularly on weekends. Our members favour the previously planned dedicated left turn lane at George Street and Bridge Street which will support traffic flow into the heart of Windsor. If modifications to this lane allow through traffic, the left turn option must be retained.

**Impact of proposed slip lane on Thompson Square community space, heritage and archaeology**

The October Project update addresses the impacts on Thompson Square parkland, heritage and archaeology separately, reflecting a fundamental lack of understanding of the significance of the area. The Thompson Square heritage precinct is one in which open community space is interconnected with the historic past. The existing 1874 Windsor Bridge is a highly significant element of the Thompson Square heritage precinct; the bridge links the past with the present. The significance of the existing bridge relates to its unique engineering heritage and its status as the oldest extant crossing of the Hawkesbury River.

As stated in the Windsor Bridge Replacement Project's original Environmental Impact Statement, the project will have significant impacts on the heritage value of Thompson Square; these impacts are being continuously realised as construction progresses. The absence of efforts to preserve the heritage of the Square has been a notable aspect of the project.

The October project update states that the proposed slip lane will reduce Thompson Square by 160 square metres. The argument that the unified open space in Thompson Square will be increased and usable is tenuous, and pays no attention to the Square's heritage significance. Much of the "unified" and "usable" space referred to in the project update will be in the shadow of a huge concrete bridge which is out of character with the historic ambience for which the Thompson Square precinct has been known and appreciated by the local community and tourists. Thus, the potential community benefits and economic

benefits through heritage tourism are negatively impacted each time there is a reduction to the Thompson Square open space.

As a further impact on the heritage value of the precinct, excavation to build the new slip lane could disrupt historic tunnels under Thompson Square.

### **Proposal to retain the historic Windsor Bridge**

Defenders of Thompson Square propose that the existing bridge be retained as an integral element of Thompson Square, as a gesture to the community in return for the community space taken from Windsor to construct a new bridge, including the proposed slip lane. This proposal is justified by the State Significant heritage of the bridge. Further justification relates to the *Windsor Bridge Replacement State Significant Infrastructure Application Report, Section 4.6.3 Design principles* which states: “Redevelop any residual road space as parkland to be integrated within Thompson Square”. We propose retention and rehabilitation of the existing bridge, residual road space, as a community and heritage asset, primarily for use by pedestrians and cyclists, with vehicular use restricted to maintenance and emergency vehicles.

We acknowledge that the option of adding an additional north-bound lane on the new bridge was considered and deemed to be unacceptable for a number of reasons outlined in the September Environmental Assessment modification. However, retention of the existing bridge for pedestrian and cyclist use would render redundant the pedestrian and cyclist lanes being constructed on the new bridge. The latter could be incorporated into traffic lanes, potentially allowing for a fourth north-bound lane and increased traffic flow.

### **In summary, this submission requests:**

- Retention of the left turn lane into George Street from Bridge Street, proposed in initial planning documents
- Retention of the existing Windsor Bridge for pedestrian, cyclist, and heritage events, in return for the Thompson Square space taken from the Windsor community through the Windsor Bridge Replacement Project
- An additional north-bound lane on the new bridge to be further investigated, including the incorporation of redundant pedestrian and cyclist lanes in traffic lanes.

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Secretary  
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