

16 February 2014

Dear Sir/Madam,

Re: WestConnex: Letter of Objection.

I write on behalf of the Save Ashfield Park community group. This group opposes any use/loss of Ashfield Park for widening Parramatta Road, locating an exhaust stack, use as a depot during construction or for any other reason.

In relation to Ashfield Park:

- WestConnex have advised 10-20 metres of Ashfield Park will be used to widen Parramatta road.
- Ashfield Council have advised that they were informed by WestConnex late last year that parts of the park may be used as a “depot” during construction. Construction could take up to seven years. The noise from moving machinery and trucks will impact greatly on residents and park users and will cause destruction to parkland.
- The development also has the potential to impact on community connectivity by stopping the residents of Haberfield from being able to easily cross into Ashfield Park and vice-versa.

The strength of community opposition to negative impacts on Ashfield Park from WestConnex is reflected in an event held in Ashfield Park on Sunday 9 February 2014 that was attended by 400-500 people. Those attending this event were concerned about the destruction and loss of parts of Ashfield Park due to WestConnex, as well as the negative impact of the toll road on the suburbs of Ashfield, Haberfield and environs. The event was attended by local Members of Parliament, the Mayor of Ashfield Council as well as Robert Borsak, MLC and Ashfield resident.

Community opposition to the loss or use of any parkland for WestConnex is also reflected in media coverage of the event. The recent event at Ashfield Park gained coverage on the channel nine news and in local media. Links to relevant articles are included for your information.¹

Ashfield Park is reserved under the Crown Lands Act for the purpose of public recreation. It should be noted that Section 11 of the Crown Lands Act 1989 requires that Crown land be managed according to the following principles:

- That environmental protection principles be observed in relation to the management and administration of Crown land.
- That the natural resources of Crown land (including water, soil, flora, fauna and scenic quality) be conserved wherever possible.
- That public use and enjoyment of appropriate Crown land be encouraged.
- That, where appropriate, multiple use of Crown land be encouraged
- That, where appropriate, Crown land should be used and managed in a way that the land and its resources are sustainable in perpetuity.
- That Crown land be occupied, used, sold, leased, licensed or otherwise dealt with in the best interests of the State consistent with the above principles.

Specifically:

- Use of the reserve must be consistent with the public purpose for which the land is dedicated or reserved. This includes uses ancillary to or supportive of the reserve purpose.

¹ <http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/newslocal/inner-west/rally-in-ashfield-park-protests-against-the-westconnex-motorway/story-fngr8h4f-1226822644582>
<http://www.burwoodscene.com.au/2014/02/11/angry-residents-protest-over-ashfield-park/>

- Improvements and developments are confined to those which support, or are ancillary to, public recreation.
- The Park cannot be used for a purpose relating to an activity that is occurring off the Park and that is not consistent with the Park's purpose. For example, car parking on the Park that serves an adjoining land use would not be acceptable.
- The land must be open to the public generally as a right. Exclusive use of the reserve should be minimised to avoid sections of the community becoming alienated from using the reserve.
- The public may only be restricted from access to parts of the Park and buildings if it is necessary for the public's enjoyment of the Park or for health and safety reasons to be excluded, for example from a workshop, equipment storage or operational facilities.

The planned use of parkland to widen Parramatta Rd and possible use of the park as a depot contravenes many of these principles.

Ashfield Park is a beautiful iconic green space that was listed on the National Trust Register in 1986 and has been listed in a specific heritage item in the recently gazetted Ashfield LEP 2013. The National Trust Register listing notes the significance of the plantings of Phoenix Canariensis in the northern part of the park which "are some of the finest to be found in Sydney" and other vegetation. The flower beds along Parramatta Road were tended by returned World War II veterans prior to Ashfield Council taking on this role. Both the flower beds, some of the magnificent Canary Date Palms and figs will be lost forever with the removal of 10-20 metres of the park along Parramatta Rd. It is vital that the heritage aspects of the park are taken into consideration as part of the EIS process.

Ashfield Park is greatly valued as a recreation area and is used in a wide range of ways. These include formal team sports, community events, small group exercise activities such as Tai Chi, meditation groups, medieval re-enactment groups, individual exercise such as jogging and walking, relaxation, picnics and barbeques. The Park is valued as an oasis of calm and relaxation in a heavily built up area. Much of the local built environment is composed of apartment blocks. The Park is in a sense the backyard for the residents of these dwellings. Maintaining and enhancing the natural environment of the Park is therefore important given its essential value to the health and wellbeing of residents and users.

We are also concerned at the impact of the WestConnex proposal on local air quality, and in particular the detrimental effects on the health of people exercising in the Park, especially children (the Park contains a children's playground and a large sports area). Duplication of the existing Parramatta Road with the proposed tunnel, with both lots of traffic meeting at Ashfield Park will increase traffic congestion and air pollution at this point. Then there is the effect of the tunnel portals on concentrating air pollution. Thirdly, the location of the ventilation stacks has not been disclosed, however it has been advised that they will be near portals. One is therefore likely to be in, or near, Ashfield Park.

The proposed M4 East will impact on streets around, and therefore access to, the Park. We would therefore like released to us WestConnex's estimates on changes in traffic volumes in the streets surrounding the Park, as well as plans for street closures in the area. Finally, information is required about how north south bus services that cross Parramatta Road at this point are to be accommodated, including any changes in route or services to be cancelled.

For all of the above reasons, we request that, should Stage 1 of WestConnex proceed, that an alternative scheme be developed that does not impact on Ashfield Park. We also seek your assurances that the Park will not be used in any way associated with the construction works, and that a ventilation stack will not be placed in or within 500 metres of the park.

The Save Ashfield Park group requests that WestConnex responds to the concerns raised in this submission in writing and makes this submission publicly available on its website.

Yours faithfully,

Jo Alley

John Hyde

For:

Save Ashfield Park.

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