

CUDGEGONG ROAD STATION DRAFT STRUCTURE PLAN

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Preamble:

Mario and I have lived in Rouse Hill since 2000. Prior to that, we lived in Schofields for 20 years, and in Mt Druitt for 5 years before that. So we have been in this district for over 30 years.

In 1984, Mario and I started a small business, which we still operate today. Our business provides a service to the building industry, especially new homes. We have a good name in the industry, and have a working knowledge of the problems facing developers and builders.

Mario is active in the greyhound industry, and he is also a Director of Richmond Race Club.

I have a Bachelor of Arts degree and a Diploma of Education, and taught at Mt Druitt High School for 8 years. I was President of the Schofields Public School P and C from 1989 to 1999. In 2004, I joined the Anti Transmission Towers Action Group, campaigning against the upgrade of Feeder 9JA from Vineyard through to Rouse Hill.

In 2005, our land was affected by the Landscape and Rural Lifestyle Zone, and I became founding President of Rouse Hill Heights Action Group Inc (RHHAG), and I still hold that position today. RHHAG represents the majority of landowners in the Draft Cudgegong Road Station Precinct study area.

Over the years, I have worked with other community groups to try to stop the upgrade of feeder 9JA, the Green Zones, the imposition of the 1 in 100,000 year flood zones, the closure of the old Schofields Station & other issues. My opinion on local issues is often sought by the Rouse Hill Times.

In 2012, I was chosen as Local Woman of the Year for the Riverstone Electorate by our local MP Kevin Conolly, and as NSW Business Partner of the Year by the NSW Housing Industry Association.

Mario and I believe in doing the right thing, and have a good name in the building industry. We also believe that people who suffer financially for the benefit of the public should be fairly compensated.

We feel that we are well qualified to give a fair, honest and accurate view of the area covered by the Draft Cudgegong Station plan.

This submission, however, is our personal one. It contains some views which may differ from those of the RHHAG submission, which represents the views of the majority of the members, or from some of our neighbours. We have followed the layout of the draft document.

SUBMISSION

1. Introduction

- 1.2.3 This states that a comprehensive site analysis has been undertaken. However, regarding vegetation, this cannot have been done without ground truthing, which has not (legally) taken place. Over the years, there has been a history of inaccurate information given by the Planning Department:
e.g. regarding the vegetation in the area covered by the Landscape and Rural Lifestyle Zone of 2005, when much was regrowth or introduced exotic species;
the plan to put Medium/High Density housing immediately to the left of Riverstone Station in Riverstone West Precinct despite a long history of inundation by floods;
one of the rationales in re-siting the existing Schofields Station was to move it to make it more disabled friendly, when the site was completely flat, with no stairs.

In addition, one of our neighbours has noted that the map provided as Figure 20 in the draft document is not accurate: the circles don't match the scale in the BLC. Either the scale diagram is wrong or the circles are. Attached is his amended map.

As a result, we recommend that the information provided by residents who have lived in the Study Area for up to 50 years, be given significant weight during decision making and that the planners come out and visit the area and talk to locals.

- 1.2.4 This states that it is desired to “achieve metropolitan planning goals to locate 80% of all new housing within walking distance of centre, like the Cudgegong Road village centre, that have good public housing”, p 5.
The amended map shows that Area 20 planning has zoned 36 acres of land situated within 800 metres of the village centre, as Very Low Density; with one housing block every 2,000 sq metres. This is a waste of valuable and popular housing land.

- 2.1 How old and how accurate is the information drawn from the various bodies listed? We wonder at the choice of photos shown on p7- most of them seem to have been taken around the site of the new station, with 2 of them showing the Cudgegong Road Switching Station. The photos are *not* indicative of the existing character of the Study Area. We have attached some photos which we feel are more indicative.
- 2.2 The local bus network also connects the Study Area to the Richmond Rail Line, but this isn't stated. It is also mentioned that “Old Windsor Road is a potential barrier for pedestrian and cycle movements west” – but Old Windsor Road is several kilometres away. I presume it should read Windsor Road. Minor points, perhaps, but it supports our claim that the research done is not accurate.
- 2.3 Any “sensitive vegetation” or “threatened species” in the Study Area only exists because current landowners have allowed the vegetation to regrow/ replanted vegetation/ not cleared their land as they are legally entitled to do. This action on their behalf should not cause the landowners any financial loss, compared to their neighbours who did clear their land.

We have seen several documents from people who worked in the area from the 1940s, or lived here from the 1960s, which state that the trees around Rouse Hill House have been cleared and regrown several times over the last 200 years. We have spoken to many of the long term residents of the area who say the same thing. As well, we have spoken to another resident who is a member of the Darug tribe who inhabited this area. He states that the land was cleared before the white man arrived, as this is the way the natives maintained their land, fed their families, and made it easier to spot and catch kangaroos, etc.

Thus most of the trees in the study area are regrowth. We note that Blacktown Council, which owns Cudgegong Park, is planning to develop the area for housing.

- 2.7 This area will not be prone to bushfire once the majority of the regrowth is removed for Medium or Low Density housing. There is no history of bushfires in this area.

As far as we are aware from our 33 years in the district and talking to long-term residents, some minor flooding occurs along Second Ponds Creek, mainly on the causeway on Rouse Road, and occasionally on Schofields Rd; there is often more significant flooding in the Oak and Gordon Road areas along First Ponds Creek.

- 2.8 The combined constraints map, Figure 12, makes the area look virtually unusable. However, many of this “constraints” are not valid or accurate (flooding, bushfire and threatened species) or are artificially imposed (Rouse Hill House Estate vista, which isn’t shown in this map.)
- 3.2 Riverstone East has now been released, and I understand that Precinct Planning is already underway. The Gazettal of the release should be done almost immediately, and landowners in Riverstone East informed that their land has been released, so that opportunists don’t take advantage of the fact that many landowners are unaware that the area has been released, to buy up their land cheaply.
- 4.1 Figure 18 shows almost all of the Study Area as “Opportunity Sites” and I agree with this estimation- all the land shown blue is prime land for Medium and Low Density housing (but not VLD, which is a waste of valuable housing land close to all facilities.)
- 4.2 This section states that an additional “3,000 dwellings (including 2,500 in Area 20)”. Does this mean that the rest of the study area, approx 200 hectares, will only provide 500 dwellings? Assuming 40 hectares is taken for the Stabling Yard and Employment Lands, this leaves 160 hectares. This equates to 3 houses per hectare! This is well below usual Low Density rates. It is poor planning to cram hundreds of people into Medium Density within 400/ 800 metres of the station, and have a few people in adjoining 2,000 sq metre lots. What is the planned density for this area?

We are concerned about plans to sterilise large parts of the Riverstone East section of the Study Area because of the Heritage Curtilage around Rouse Hill House (RHH). We see this as a resurrection of the Landscape and Rural Lifestyle Zone from 2005- the so called “Green Zones”, an attempt to make de facto parks of residents’ land.

The vista from Rouse Hill House was always of Windsor Road and the land to the North East. Previous governments have had no qualms in changing this, re-routing Windsor Road, building the Rouse Hill Town Centre, allowing a Bunnings to be built, and planning Industrial and housing land in the main vista in Box Hill and Box Hill Industrial Precincts, yet they want to freeze the vista from the back of the property.

“The NSW Department of Environment, Climate Change and Water state that the “landscape surrounding historic Rouse Hill House...has been gradually transformed from paddock to parkland” (www.environment.nsw.gov.au).”

(Quoted in *Land Use in Australia: Rouse Hill House and Farm and the Struggle between Tradition and Modernity* Tim Graham, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, University of Technology Sydney)

It seems the NSW Department of Planning is able to make changes to the vista when it sees fit, whether moving from paddock to parkland, or re-routing Windsor Road.

It is hypocritical to try to freeze an artificial vista from RHH, when the very uniqueness of the property is that it was not frozen in time- it was a family home which changed with the times. If the property was still owned by the Rouse/Terry family, it would have continued to change, just as the vista would have continued to change around it.

It should be noted that under the ISEPP, all infrastructure is allowed in the Study Area. So RHH looks out onto several lines of electricity transmission towers and poles, a telecommunications tower, several water towers, industrial buildings, commercial centres and housing estates; sewage, water treatment and water desalination plants would also be allowed, along with nuclear reactors; but God forbid, that you could actually see more than a couple of family homes from the barn!!! Perhaps 700-800 metre blocks could be placed in the “visually sensitive” area, with colonial style homes encouraged. The fairest way to shield RHH from the 21st century is to plant trees along the boundaries of the estate and the Regional Park, and if necessary along the ridgeline (buy the land if more than a few metres width is needed.) This will “protect” RHH from having to look out onto family homes.

- 5.2 We note that there is a plan for expansion of the Tallawong Road Stabling Yard, with at least 6 landowners on Tallawong, Gordon and Oak Roads recently contacted to tell them that their land is to be acquired for the stabling yard. This will reduce the amount of land available for employment, and is not a desirable outcome next to a station and a major road. It is poor planning practice.

We also question the accuracy of the zoning of the two fingers of green in the NW of the Study Area, across Guntawong and Tallawong Roads, Figure 20. Landowners there reject that their land is heavily vegetated or important.

- 5.3 Figures 25-28 show the land densities in the Study Area, but seem very unclear on the land currently Zoned Very Low Density (VLD) in the Area 20 Precinct. This has all been bundled under Low Density Detached House Living. Does this mean that VLD does not exist, or that VLD can occur anywhere in the area shown in Low Density Living (Figure 25) and presumably anywhere else in the Growth Centres zoned as Low Density Living?

It is interesting to note that the VLD land is surrounded on 3 sides by Medium Density Townhouse or Apartment Living. It seems that the owners of VLD land have been financially penalised for looking after the vegetation, or for being within the vista of Rouse Hill House Estate.

We feel that the type of housing in the area should reflect the type of housing popular with the public. The success of The Ponds shows that people want detached houses in good areas on decent size blocks. We worry that High Density living in the outer western suburbs will not be popular, and inward looking developments have failed miserably in public housing estates. We do not want to create ghettos. We also wonder how viable the Village Centre will be, with Rouse Hill Regional Centre so close- look at the demise of the neighbourhood centres near Mt Druitt Westfield.

- 5.4 This section admits that “due to the high level of amenity and quality of life afforded within the Study Area ...and the added accessibility delivered by the North West Rail Link, the take up/ realisation rate is considered to be 81% for housing and 96% for employment.” Yet much of the Employment Lands will be taken by the extension of the Stabling Yards. More poor planning practice, the Stabling Yard should be moved.

As well, by putting in VLD blocks of 2,000 sq metres, you are quarantining valuable housing land close to all facilities. We feel that the zonings should be altered to make them more akin to the types of homes that people want.

Unlike 4.2, this section talks about providing an additional 3,500 dwellings. This means only providing extra 1,000 dwellings in the 200 hectares outside Area 20 in the Study Area, which is still only around 6 houses per hectare- again, poor planning.

- 6.1 “Current parking policies and minimum apartment sizes” need to be reviewed? You are talking about an area approximately 45 kms from the CBD. People don’t want to live in tiny apartments, with room for only one car if any at all. Public transport is only useful if it goes where you want to go, when you want to go there. Most households these days in the outer suburbs have one car per adult, and the success of the “McMansions” is because they are the type of house people want to live in.

We feel that this precinct is not suited to High Density living. Medium Density Living should be limited to the area within 400 metres of the Village Centre, starting from up to 6 storeys around the station and getting lower as it moves out. The rest of the area should be Low Density, starting with blocks of 450 square metres just outside the 400 metre circle, and moving out to 700-800 metres past the 800m metre circle.

To cut the cost of Sydney housing land, cut the \$\$ that Govts gouge from each block.

High and Medium Density Housing does not allow for privacy, backyards, clothes lines, flow-through ventilation or trees. These properties need clothes dryers and air-conditioning, and children have to stay inside unless their parents are home to take them down to the local “tree museum” to play. Inward-looking housing is an experiment that failed miserably in Mt Druitt and Sydney’s South West, and it should not be repeated.

The larger blocks allow for retention of trees, which will help preserve the vista from Rouse Hill House. They also allow for children to play, for privacy and gardens.

There are hundreds of hectares of prime housing land in the North West Growth Centres. It does not have to be zoned as 125 sq metre blocks. This isn't Hong Kong. Much of this land is not suited to agriculture, so it isn't affecting Sydney's Food Bowl.

- 6.2 “Relevant parts of the Area 20 Precinct will be reviewed.” This allows for the VLD zoning to be removed, and replaced with either Low or Medium Density. We suggest that the R2 and R3 zones be allowed to downsize- that is, allow lower densities if the market demands it. Ask people what type of housing they want, and then give it to them. Don't impose Medium or High Density living on us, when we still hanker after the great Australian Dream. If we want to live in a box with little car parking with hundreds of neighbours, it will be in the CBD, not in the outer west!

Conclusion

Our personal view is that the imposition of high density living and tiny medium density apartments in the outer west will create ghettos. Talk to the buyers -people will buy these tiny boxes, because that is all they can afford, but they will not want to live in them.

This is not the CBD -buyers don't want little boxes and no car spaces. Modern families want multiple bedrooms and have multiple cars. We know that several of the Councillors in Blacktown City Council agree with this, and we have been told that Blacktown Council advised against putting the R3 zoning on parts of Area 20.

There are hundreds of hectares of prime housing land in the North West Growth Centres, close to all facilities, used only for rural living.

Most of the remnant trees in this area are regrowth, and are only there because the landowners encouraged or allowed them to regrow. If any of these trees need to be preserved for the public and for future generations, then the public must pay. Buy the land for parks; don't impose artificial Green Zones on the land through VLD.

The same applies to the vista from Rouse Hill House. If the vista must be frozen in time, buy the land, or retain a thin line of trees to “protect” the house from the 21st century- don't make it a de facto park at the expense of the current landowners.

Finally, ensure that the planners visit the Study Area and talk to the residents before they commit to a plan.

Urban Planning is littered with “it seemed like a good idea at the time” ghettos.

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